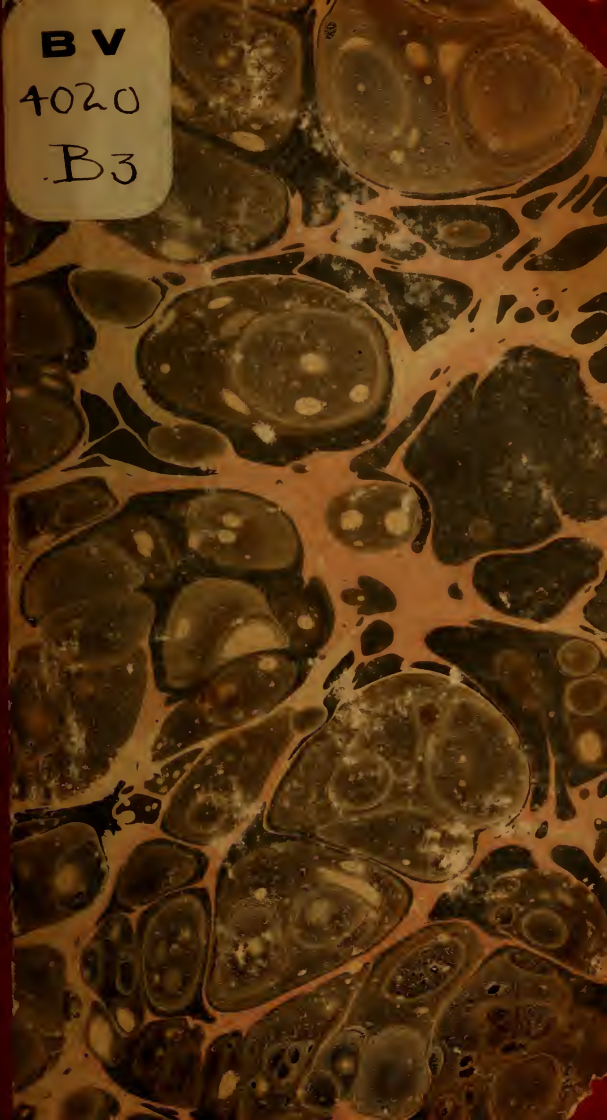


BV

4020

B3



L. Clark
B 0014



Class BV4020

Book B3









LETTERS

TO

YOUNG MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL,

ON THE

IMPORTANCE AND METHOD OF STUDY.

BY NATHAN BANGS, D.D.

Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

1 Timothy iv, 13.

“Let the nature, reasons, and motives, of thy ministry, be ever
in the view of thy heart and conscience.”—*Dr. A. Clarke.*

NEW-YORK,

Published by N. Bangs and J. Emory, for the Methodist
Episcopal Church, at the Conference Office,
13 Crosby-street.

Azor Hoyt, Printer.

.....

1826.

BV4020
B3

In Exchange
Drew Theolog. Sem.
5 Ap 1907

PREFACE.



THE following Letters were first published monthly in the Methodist Magazine, with a hope that they might be of some use to those to whom they were addressed. In the course of their publication, the Author had the satisfaction to hear from many respectable sources, that they were well received, and were likely to be productive of good ; and since their completion several individuals have requested that they might be published in a small volume, so as to put them more within the reach of those for whom they were especially intended. This was declined, from a persuasion that the matter was not of sufficient import-

ance to justify the expense of a separate publication ; but this persuasion was overruled by a vote of the New-York Conference at its last session, by which the author was requested to revise the pieces, and republish them in a small book.* In compliance with the wishes of his brethren, thus expressed, he thought it his duty to make them as perfect as he could, by as careful a revision as his circumstances would allow, and thus present them to his junior brethren in the ministry as a token of his sincere

* Since the above was written, the author has received the following Resolution from the Canada Conference :—

“ Resolved, That the Conference respectfully request the Agents to republish, in a convenient volume, the excellent course of study published in the late volumes of the Magazine ; at the same time wishing the author to make such amendments in the work as may to him appear most proper.

Signed, WILLIAM CASE,
Secretary.”

Sept. 20, 1825.

wishes for their welfare, and extended usefulness as ministers of Christ. Several emendations have been made, and three Letters, one of which was addressed to a Junior Preacher, and published in the Magazine, the other two composed for this work, have been added.

In deference to the judgment of those who have requested their publication in this form, they are submitted, not without some degree of reluctance and diffidence to those for whom they were intended ; hoping that they may be a means of exciting them to a diligent pursuit of useful knowledge, holiness, and happiness.

They now appear in the form of Letters, because the manner in which they were first published led the author to adopt the epistolary style of writing ; and therefore in

the revision but little alteration in that respect was necessary.

It is hoped that no one will suppose the author, in publishing his thoughts on this subject, intended to assume a lordly and dictatorial attitude in relation to those to whom he addresses himself. He intended no such thing. He has reason to lament his own want of a more accurate and comprehensive knowledge of the various subjects which come within the range of theological studies ; and a sense of this want, rather than from any exalted opinion of his attainments—that others might avoid the difficulties with which he has often had to contend—induced him to commit his thoughts to writing. And it should be recollected that the primary object of the writer was not so much to teach what *truth is*, as to

show *how* and *where* it may be *found*, by recommending some of those authors who have displayed it to the best advantage. His humble office therefore is, not so much to *open* the *path*, as it is to direct the traveller *where to find it*, by pointing to those more laborious and skilful hands, who, by their indefatigable efforts, have exalted the valleys, and brought the mountains and hills low, and who say unto us, “This is the way, walk ye in it.”

If this humble attempt should, in any measure, contribute to increase the number of faithful, wise, holy, and useful ministers of the Lord Jesus, the end of the writer will be fully accomplished.

N. BANGS.

New-York, August, 1825.



LETTERS

TO

YOUNG MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL.



LETTER I.

Some General Remarks on the Importance and Utility of Study, for a Successful Discharge of Ministerial Duty.

By *study* is meant that application of the mind, in reading, meditation, reflection, and observation, which is necessary to enrich and adorn it with useful knowledge. In what may be said on this subject, it will be taken for granted that you have not now to learn the elementary principles of language. It will likewise be assumed that you are convinced satisfactorily of your call to the sacred work of the ministry, that you have experienced the renovating power of the

Holy Ghost upon your heart, and consequently that you have not now to learn the first principles of religion. But if, indeed, you be destitute of that knowledge of God through Jesus Christ which can be acquired only by experience, all the study in the universe, even were you master of the whole circle of the sciences, will never qualify you for the holy work of the ministry. From these remarks it will be perceived that the observations which follow are designed chiefly for those who are just entering upon the sacred office.

It was said above that you are supposed to be acquainted with the first principles of your vernacular language. But if you have been so unfortunate as to be destitute of even this degree of knowledge, be not ashamed to avow it, but determine to remain so no longer. By all means begin now : and that you may not fail in this first attempt, procure the assistance of some judicious friend, who, in a few hours, will give you more information on this subject than you could otherwise obtain in many days of hard study merely from books.

Books, however, you must have. The philosophy of language is an extensive and curious study ; and the being able to determine the meaning of a sentence from a critical knowledge of its grammatical construction, especially where its apparent obscurity elicits controversy, evinces the importance of grammatical knowledge. And though too much stress may be laid upon verbal criticism in determining theological questions, yet to detect any fallacious reasoning from such data, a knowledge of grammar is necessary. MURRAY will furnish you with enough of rules and illustrations. WEBSTER, although the popular cry would lay an embargo upon his philosophical grammar, will make you think for yourself, and give you much useful information upon this critical subject. By all means read him.

Language is the organ of communication between man and man ; and therefore the understanding of the language in which we must convey our thoughts and sentiments is essentially necessary for a successful discharge of duty. In reading, therefore, no

word should pass without being well understood. But reading itself will never make man a master even of his own thoughts. I would have you, therefore, write something every day ;—write and re-write ; compose and re-compose ; alter, mend, retrench, and add, until it be correct ; and at first especially, submit your composition to some judicious critic, with a candid request that he will point out every fault, whether in style or matter, which he may discover : this do until you acquire a confidence in yourself, and can compose correctly ; for I venture to affirm that no man can be a good off-hand speaker, until he has brought his mind to a habit of close thinking by committing his thoughts to paper, and has thereby learned to vary his ideas, clothing them in different dresses, and has also learned to amplify and analyze his subjects, until he has completely familiarized them to his mind. One hour's labour in this way every day will be of more service to enlarge the mind, and to make you master of your own powers, than many days employment in reading merely. It will give a sprightliness to your

thoughts, by calling into action the latent energies of the soul, and enable you to spread your ideas before you in a systematical order. I say then again, whatever you leave undone, neglect not to write, however blunderingly at first, and continue, until by a severe criticism upon your own composition, you acquire an habitual method of communicating your thoughts in an easy, perspicuous, and vigorous style. Do not let a consciousness of your insufficiency prevent your utmost efforts, nor a failure in attaining your object immediately or as soon as you might wish, cool your ardour in pursuing your path. Rather let a sense of difficulties induce you to redouble your diligence to overcome them. The steeper and more lofty the mountain, the more extensive will be your prospect, and the more vigorous your faculties, when you shall have reached its summit. I know a minister of very eminent attainments in literature and theological knowledge, of whom a great man said at the commencement of his studies, "He is like a merchant beginning business upon a capital of sixpence." Diligence and perseve-

rance will overcome every impediment, and surmount every difficulty. On the first impression, therefore, of your call to this all-important work, lay it down as an invariable maxim of your future life, that, in addition to the other active duties of your station, you are to be a man of study. Every science, the knowledge of which may enable us the better to understand and illustrate the sacred Scriptures, to defend and enforce the truths of Christianity, should be the object of our pursuit.

Having made these general remarks upon the importance of having a correct knowledge of the language in which we speak and write, and the necessity of a close application for the cultivation of our mental powers, in the next Letter I shall commence, if Providence permit, to point out a more particular method of study. This Letter, therefore, shall be concluded by saying, that a life of prayer to God, and a uniform obedience to all his commands, are essential for every minister of Jesus Christ. This remark is made here to prevent any misapprehension in the mind of the reader who

might suppose that piety is considered as only a secondary qualification. So far from this it is considered that the persons addressed are already regenerated by the Holy Ghost, that they are conscious of a divine call to the holy work of the ministry, and that their object in engaging in it, is to bring as many of the wandering sons of men as possible into the fold of Christ, and to feed them with the *sincere milk of the word*, that they may “grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.”

LETTER II.

The Method by which a Minister is enabled to Explain the Holy Scriptures.

THAT the mind may be successfully employed in the pursuit of knowledge, the object should be fixed. What is the object which a conscientious minister proposes to himself? It is the salvation of himself and those who hear him. Every branch of knowledge, therefore, after which you may seek, must be laid under contribution for the attainment of this primary and ultimate object.

Now as the sacred Scriptures reveal the only method of salvation to lost sinners, the study of these has the first claim upon the attention of the ministers of Jesus Christ. Hence they are required to be “able ministers of the New-Testament.” To be this, they must be competent to *explain*, to *defend*, and to *enforce*, the holy Scriptures.

Without undervaluing, in the smallest degree, the luminous and learned commentaries which have appeared in our own and other languages upon the sacred volume, and for which we cannot be too grateful, we say that the best expositor of Scripture is Scripture itself. To one that has never made the experiment, it would appear surprising how much one part of the sacred volume corroborates and illustrates the other. Every part mutually explains, supports, and confirms the whole. This being the case, it will be perceived of how much importance it is for a student in divinity to read this sacred book attentively throughout, and that with a continual reference and diligent examination of all the parallel texts and marginal readings, and that the meaning may be the more

clearly comprehended, ascertain if possible the general scope and design of each writer. This method of reading will abundantly compensate the student for all his labour ; and it is such an essential part of duty, that he cannot hope to succeed in knowing the holy Scriptures, which are able to make one wise unto salvation through faith in Christ, without it. It is, indeed, only by reading the Scriptures by course, that we can perceive their connexion, mutual dependance, and admirable harmony. Even were we to view them as collections of historical facts—and they are certainly the oldest and most authentic history in the world—we must, in order to have an accurate and comprehensive knowledge of their narrations, begin at the first chapter of Genesis, and proceed regularly through all the historical parts of the Old and New Testaments, without interruption.* This method will richly repay our labour, not only by enabling us to trea-

* To complete the history of the Jewish nation until their dispersion after our Saviour's time, you must consult the historical Books of the Apocrypha, and accompany your consultation of these with a perusal of Prideaux's *Connexions of the Old and New Testaments*.

sure up a knowledge of historical facts and incidents, but also by giving us a wonderful view of the providential dealings of God with many of the nations of the earth, and with the nation of Israel in particular. The same method of reading ought to be pursued, that is, regularly and constantly, with a continual reference to parallel texts and marginal notes, in all the other parts of Scripture, if we would ascertain the precise meaning of the Holy Spirit in these divine writings.

To assist the student, when difficulties occur—and this will always be the case more or less—recourse must be had to commentators of approved merit. And here we have abundant help. But it will be quite sufficient for those to whom these remarks are addressed, to have recourse to Wesley, Coke, Clarke, Benson, and Henry. You need go no farther in search of commentaries; but you may add Calmet's, Wood's, and Martindale's dictionaries, Harmer's observations, and Fleury's manners of the ancient Israelites, by Dr. Clarke. Do not hastily run through a multitude of books, but thoroughly examine those you consult, that you may, by

understanding their contents, appear to profit by what you read. It is far better to make yourself familiar with a few choice ones, than to rummage through a host of them without understanding any. A suitable variety, however, on the same subjects, for the purpose of collating the opinions of various authors, will always be satisfactory. As a convenient text book, on a variety of subjects connected with theology, Buck's Theological Dictionary will be a valuable acquisition to your library. In the mean time I must remind you again, if you would succeed, you must turn commentator yourself, and frequently write down your own thoughts, not, indeed, with a view to publish them, but for your own improvement in biblical knowledge.

LETTER III.

*Those Studies requisite to enable one to Defend
the Sacred Scriptures.*

WE have enemies to encounter. The revelation of God's word has been assailed, and continues to be assailed by malice, by

ingenuity, by sarcasm, and in a word, by all the strength of human genius, learning, and depravity. This hydra of opposition must be encountered, and driven from the field ; not, indeed, by such weapons as the enemy wields, but by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left. The Scriptures must be defended.

To do this effectually it is indispensable to study the evidence of their authenticity and genuineness. This evidence is twofold, external and internal. The external lies scattered over an immense field, and must be collected from *history*, sacred and profane ; *chronology*, a careful collation of the events and facts recorded in the book of God, with corresponding events and the same facts, recorded in profane authors ; from *prophecy*, comparing the prediction with its accomplishment ; from *miracles*, distinguishing between genuine and pretended miracles ; from *geography*, ascertaining the geographical situations of the places, and showing that they are accurately described in the sacred Scriptures.

The bare mention of these sources of

evidence is quite sufficient to evince the vast importance of several branches of science to form the able minister of the New Testament. It is needless to enlarge upon each of these heads ; but as it is the object of these remarks to assist the younger student in pursuing his studies, it may not be improper to mention a few of those authors which will help him upon each of these branches of knowledge.

For history, next to the holy Scriptures themselves, *Josephus* should be read with attention, having the Bible always along side of him, that the agreement or disagreement may be noted. His account of the Jewish wars, and of the final overthrow of Jerusalem in particular, is all-important, as it shows the exact fulfilment of many of the predictions, both in the Old and New Testaments, respecting the destruction of the Jewish nation and polity. Next to him are *Shuckford's* and *Prideaux's Connexions* ; the latter especially should not be overlooked. As a compendium of ancient history, and as having a bearing especially upon the truth of Scripture prophecy, *Rollin's Ancient History*

is next in importance. To these you may add *Tacitus*, translated by *Murphy*, which is written in such an excellent style, that, while it adds to your stock of historical information, will give you a knowledge of, and a taste for, elegant composition. But if this be beyond your reach, supply its place by *Goldsmith's History of Rome* and of *Greece*. Though these are but compendiums, yet they contain much useful information in few words, and are therefore the more easily remembered. *Tacitus* fully confirms *St. Paul's* account of the wickedness of the Heathen world in the first chapter of his admirable Epistle to the Romans ; and, without intending it, corroborates the testimony of the Fathers of the church respecting the early existence of Christians in the city of Rome, and thus unwittingly gives his suffrage to the truth of Christianity.

While on the subject of history, perhaps it may be well to complete the catalogue of authors which it is expedient to consult for a general historical knowledge ; for I would have you thoroughly acquainted with the history of the world, and of the church in

particular. But here I am at some loss what histories to recommend. You have had enough of ancient history, unless you add *Gibbon's History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* : but in reading this, the style of which is so captivating, you are in continual danger of having your judgment biassed against Christianity, and your heart corrupted by the impurity of some of his sentiments. Taking for granted, however, that, by this time, you are able to separate the precious from the vile, and to discriminate with tolerable accuracy between truth and falsehood, you may indulge yourself in this elegant description of fallen greatness. But be sure to guard yourself against the influence of his sarcastical sneers at saints and bishops, and believe him in earnest only when he vouches for historical facts.

With the same caution you must read *Hume's History of England*, and its continuation by *Smollet* and *Bisset*. His infidelity ekes out so often, and his sophistical reasonings, whenever Christianity comes in his way, are so apparent, that, unless your mind be previously fortified with truth, you will

hardly escape the contagion of his principles unhurt. With this precaution continually before you, by all means read him. Without any such caution, you may read *Robertson's History of the Emperor Charles V.* He unfolds the events of the reformation in a masterly manner, without disguising the truth with the speculations of a false philosophy. By all means make yourself acquainted with the history of your own country. *Robertson's History of America, Marshall's Life of General Washington, and Ramsay's History of the American Revolution,* will be sufficient for this purpose, unless you add *Trumbull's History of Connecticut, and Parish's History of New-England.* But you may omit all these, if you think best, until you have studied the history of the church. Begin with the Acts of the Apostles, and if Eusebius can be had, take him next, and connect with him Mr. Wesley's translation of the Fathers; dip also into W. Cave's *Primitive Christianity,* and Cave's *Lives of the Fathers.* An impartial Church History is yet a desideratum in the Christian world, which it is hoped some future historian, divested of sectarian

prejudice and partiality, will supply. Mo-
sheim is the best ; but he seems to be more
famed for philosophical and historical ac-
curacy than for experimental Christianity ;
but read him with attention. Wesley's is
rather an abridgment than otherwise, and
he seems, in many respects, to have trusted
more to the judgment of others, than to have
exercised his own. His compilation, how-
ever, may be consulted with much profit.
Milner and Haweis are both so tainted with
the peculiarities of their own creed, that the
offensive smell of Calvinism is exhaled from
almost every page. Haweis especially, to
establish his point, lays an embargo upon all
the Fathers before Augustine, the father of
his favourite doctrine, and will not allow
their testimony, particularly on points of the-
ology. But as it is necessary to look at er-
ror sometimes in order to heighten the value
and beauties of truth, you may read both
Haweis and Milner, always recollecting that
implicit confidence is not required in any
human authority.

As a Methodist preacher, you must ac-
quaint yourself thoroughly with every part

of the history of Methodism, from its commencement to the present time. In this department of history you have materials enough, furnished by both friends and enemies, to work upon. The Journals of Messrs. Wesley, Coke, and Asbury ; Myles' Chronological History, Crowther's Portraiture of Methodism, and Lee's History of the Methodists ; The WESLEY FAMILY, by Dr. A. Clarke, The Life of JOHN and CHARLES WESLEY, by the Rev. H. Moore, Benson's Life of FLETCHER, and Drew's Life of Dr. COKE ; and the British and American Minutes of Conferences, will furnish you with a full and complete history of Methodism from its infancy to its present state of maturity.

In the study of ecclesiastical history, you are not to look only for historical details of facts, and to watch the various ramifications of those heresies with which the church has been afflicted ; but also to detect the depravity of the human heart, by following it into its various labyrinths of error and vice ; to mark the weakness and strength of the human judgment in its pursuit after truth ; and

likewise to witness the alternate triumph and depression of pure and undefiled religion, and to look with admiration at the wonderful displays of divine grace and mercy towards his people, particularly in their various sufferings. Another very important object in this department of study is, to ascertain the primitive mode of church government. Here you will be led to notice, in the progress of Christianity, the gradual departure of the church from Apostolic simplicity and purity, and to contrast, during the period of the Reformation, the various modes which were adopted, and the arguments used in defence of each, by the several sects. Too much accuracy of discrimination, and attentive examination of the conflicting opinions of different authors, cannot be bestowed upon this subject with a view to this object ; and, it is presumed, that the more profoundly it is investigated, the less will be your bigoted attachment to any particular form, and more moderate your tone of censure towards those who dissent from you and from each other. This effect may be produced without any diminution of your zeal for primitive order,

or any wavering respecting your adherence to your own particular mode. A censorious bigotry is rather the mark of want of thought than of a well informed mind upon this subject. These remarks are designed to guard you against an over positive air when you discourse upon this subject, and to show the necessity of profound research in order to settle your mind upon a solid and catholic basis.

As the life of Christ is intimately connected with the history of the church, perhaps it might be thought that I should recommend this to your consideration. As it is recorded in the four gospels, I recommend it with all my heart. But all paraphrases upon them, which profess to be histories of Christ, are not worthy of the time you must consume in reading them. They dwindle into insignificance when contrasted with the simple, energetic, and concise narratives of the inspired evangelists. By reading these in *harmony*, you will derive more satisfaction and solid benefit, than you would from a thousand paraphrastical details of human composition. The simple manner in which

the evangelists introduce Jesus to our notice, and trace his progress through life, with the artless story of his tragical sufferings and death, and of his triumphant entry into heaven, needs not the varnish of human eloquence to add to its native force and beauty.

In the present day, when such mighty exertions are making in every part of the Christian world, for diffusing the renovating influence of Christianity by missionary and bible societies, you should acquaint yourself with the history of these institutions, and thus mark the progress of gospel truth and holiness. This will enlarge the heart, and excite a spirit of prayer, and animate your zeal for the prosperity of the sacred cause in which so many are engaged. Is it not an unpardonable defect for a minister of the gospel to be ignorant of the operations of those societies which have for their object the restoration of man to the image of God ! A comprehensive knowledge of the *past* and of the *present* transactions of the church, will enable us to form a judgment of the probable results of the several causes which are at work, and thereby teach us how to

act, what means to apply, to warn, to rebuke, and to exhort, with all long-suffering and patience. *Brown's History of Missions, Owen's History of the British and Foreign Bible Society*, with the annual Reports of the Bible and Missionary Societies of your own and other countries, will afford you ample information on these subjects.

One remark is necessary to prevent misapprehension. It is not meant that you should, while increasing your stock of historical knowledge, confine yourself solely to history. Whatever particular branch of knowledge you may pursue, you will devote more or less of time every day to the study of the doctrines and precepts of the gospel; and the whole must be mingled with unceasing prayer to God. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him."

LETTER IV.

Chronology, Prophecy, and Miracles.

CHRONOLOGY is perhaps one of the most intricate and difficult branches of knowledge connected with the study of divinity ; and yet, that we may be thoroughly furnished with arguments of defence against the assaults of our adversaries, it is important and necessary. At present, however, you are not advised to enter into a laboured investigation of this subject. Most commentators have added to the value of their works by the insertion of chronological notices ; and Dr. Clarke especially, has bestowed no little labour upon this subject, and furnished his readers with an analogous view of the dates of the various events and transactions recorded in the Holy Scriptures, and those contained in profane histories.

This department of study is of infinite use in determining the truth of prophecy, by enabling us to ascertain the exact *time* in which it was delivered, as well as the time

of its accomplishment. And every person must see the bearing this kind of evidence has upon the divine authority of Christianity. Suppose, for instance, that an infidel should assert that the predictions, respecting the overthrow and total destruction of Nineveh and Babylon, were uttered after those cities were destroyed; how shall we otherwise obviate his objection than by proving from chronological history that the time of these prophets was long anterior to the desolation and destruction of those once populous and renowned cities? It is well known, that such was the irresistible force of evidence, arising from the prophecies of Daniel respecting the successive rise and downfall of the four great ancient monarchies, that the famous *Porphyry* affirmed that these prophecies were written *after* the events had come to pass. But here comes in the help of chronology, and proves that Daniel lived and prophesied a long time before these events happened, and that his prophecies were even translated into Greek a hundred years before they were accomplished. This is presented as a specimen of the great use

a knowledge of chronology is to the biblical student, that he may defend himself against the onsets of libertines and infidels. Attention to this subject will always teach the judicious mind how to apply this branch of knowledge to advantage.

Closely connected with *Chronology* is the study of PROPHECY. As none but the infinite and all-comprehensive mind of God can so penetrate into futurity as to know *when* and *how* events will be accomplished, so the exact fulfilment of any prediction uttered by man, must prove that *his mind* was under the guidance of the *Infinite Mind* when such prediction was uttered. The fulfilment of prophecy, therefore, affords one of the most incontestible evidences in favour of the divine authority of the Book in which such prophecies are recorded. This subject, then, ought to be well understood.

The prophecies contained in the Holy Scriptures relate to nations, to Christ, to the Church, and to individual persons. These must be selected with care by him who would be an accomplished minister, and their application sought for in those

events which, by their exact coincidence to the predictions, proclaim their accomplishment. The fulfilment of the prophecies of the Old Testament, which relate to the rise and fall of empires, to the prosperity, declension, and to the destruction of cities, is to be sought for in sacred and profane histories; those which relate to Christ must be sought for in the New Testament, particularly in the four Gospels; and those which relate to the Church in general, in the history of the Church; and those which evidently point to individuals, in the life and conduct of those individuals, many of which had their accomplishment soon after they were spoken. *Simpson's Plea for Religion* is an excellent help to the just application of those particular prophecies which centre in the person of Christ; and *Bishop Newton's Dissertations on the Prophecies* should be in the library of every Christian divine.

But in the study of prophecy you must take care not to turn prophet yourself, by anticipating events which are yet wrapt up in futurity. Most commentators on the Apocalypse have dashed their heads against

a wall, by attempting to run into the dark periods of futurity, guided only by the false light of human conjecture, instead of being led by the light of heaven, which points to the fulfilment of a prediction by a corresponding event. The strained application of some of the prophecies, such as that of Daniel and St. John to the French Revolution by Faber and others, with many more of the like nature, while it serves to stagger the faith of weak believers, and to confirm skeptics in their perpetual doubts, betrays also the political prejudice and national vanity of their authors. The predictions of God were never uttered for the purpose of establishing political creeds, or of bloating the mind of man with national pride and vanity.

Most commentators of established reputation have noticed with sufficient particularity the fulfilment of many of the predictions. *Josephus* will confirm the predictions of our Saviour concerning the destruction of Jerusalem; and *Rollin* will lead you to desolated Babylon, Tyre, and Nineveh, and from these mournful spectacles of ancient

grandeur, point you to the inspired souls of Isaiah and Jeremiah, who denounced their overthrow long before it came to pass ; and the same impartial historian will shew you the successive elevation and depression of the haughty Babylonian, the bear-like Persian, the quick-paced Grecian, the eagle-eyed, and, for a time, invincible Roman, empires ; all of whose prototypes may be found in the prophecies of Daniel, the *man greatly beloved of his God*. *Prideaux* will help you through the labyrinth of the remainder of Daniel, and particularly that part of him which relates to the Messiah.

Those prophecies, the fulfilment of which has not yet been declared by corresponding events, and the obscurity of which is only occasioned by the darkness of futurity, leave till time and circumstances shall develope their hidden meaning, and shed an infallible light upon the language in which they were proclaimed. Do not risk your reputation for a wise and good man by undertaking to be a competitor with the *Seers of God*, when you have nothing but presumptuous conjectures to guide your dubious sight. And

above all, imitate not those whose political partialities have emboldened them to enter the sanctuary of God, and to convert the implements of the sacred temple into implements of war, and to enkindle the fire of hell in the breasts of their countrymen, that they might, with less consciousness of guilt, shed human blood. I accuse not their intentions ; but I condemn their heedless impetuosity, which, however, I only mention to make others afraid. When the time is come for the seals of the Apocalypse to be broken, St. John will *speake*—and his language shall be *understood* ;—till then let no one presume to give him a tongue, nor affect his tremulous but determined voice. But by all means study the prophecies, and mark their accomplishment. Apply the evidence derivable from hence to the defence and establishment of your religion.

MIRACLES. The miraculous interposition of Divine Providence, as recorded in the sacred Scriptures, proclaims one of the most stupendous evidences in favour of their authenticity. Conscious of the invincible strength of this species of testimony, infidel-

ity has exerted all its ingenuity to weaken its force. But though it has brought all its artillery to play against this fortress in which the Christian defends himself, it has remained impervious to the strokes. Every minister therefore, that he may avail himself of this weapon of defence to the best advantage, should well understand the nature of a miracle. This is the more necessary because there have been so many pretended miracles palmed upon the world. To detect the falsity of all such, learn to distinguish with accuracy between genuine and spurious miracles. *Campbell* has written well on this subject. He has met with manly dignity, and unravelled with honest freedom, the sophistry of Hume, while he has evinced the superior excellence of his cause, and tested the invincible strength of his arguments, by the spirit and temper with which he managed the controversy, and put his antagonist to flight. You cannot, therefore, read him without profit. If he has any fault, it is that of paying too much deference to the judgment of his hardy antagonist. The argument, however, in favour of Scriptural

miracles has obtained a complete triumph in the hands of this champion for divine truth.

Saurin has also some excellent remarks upon miracles. Among other things, he has laid down the following marks of a genuine miracle. 1. It must be wrought in confirmation of *truth*—for God will never interpose his authority to establish a *lie*, nor to make *falsehood* appear like *truth*. 2. It must be above human power to effect—for that which is within the reach of human might, needs not the interference of Omnipotence. 3. It must be susceptible of the examination of the understanding and senses of mankind—otherwise pretended miracles, which always elude examination, could never be detected, nor genuine ones understood and accredited. 4. To establish its genuineness beyond the reach of controversy, it must be wrought in the presence of disinterested and competent witnesses—otherwise the laws of rational testimony and belief may be contravened, and gross impositions practised upon mankind, to the discredit of truth and virtue. 5. Though it be not

essential to the character of a genuine miracle to be effected always *instantaneously*, yet when this characteristic accompanies any event, which otherwise might be accounted for upon rational principles, but cannot be accounted for under such peculiar circumstances, and withal announces the hand of God for its production, it must be admitted as miraculous.

Now it is thought that all the miracles recorded in the Bible, whether in the Old or New Testament, exhibit all these marks of genuineness ; and consequently bear the stamp of divine authority. I desire you to make yourself master of this subject, and to examine for yourself the miraculous interpositions of divine Providence and grace, which stand recorded in the Book of God, and apply the above rules to them with accuracy and impartiality ; and you will find their truth so glaring as to blind the eyes of infidelity, and their language so intelligible and determined as to silence every cavil of a skeptical philosophy. You may, indeed, admit some of the events recorded in Scripture as miraculous, which were such as

might have come to pass in the ordinary course of divine Providence ; and, therefore, their miraculousness is to be determined only from the particular time and manner in which they took place ; such as the “ thunder and rain ” in answer to the prayer of *Samuel*, 1 Sam. xii, 16—19, and the abundance of rain in answer to the prayer of *Elijah*, 1 Kings xviii, 41—45. Though thunder and rain come in the ordinary course of God’s providence, or as some would say, according to the uniform operation of the laws of nature, yet their coming at that time, and under those particular circumstances, in answer to the prayer, and according to the prediction of the prophets, is a manifest proof of their being miraculous. But there are numerous other miracles recorded in the Bible, which, as far as we can perceive, could have had no existence but by an application of divine power to the subject of them. Among a multitude of others, you may fix your attention upon the gift of tongues upon the day of Pentecost : such a power, to speak instantaneously in a foreign language, is clearly beyond the or-

dinary capacity of any man. The apostles, therefore, must have been immediately assisted by Omnipotence.

By all means, then, study thoroughly the subject of miracles. The application of this species of evidence to the truth of divine revelation is irresistible. Their existence loudly and most conclusively proclaims the presence and operation of an Almighty hand. The God of nature and of nature's laws has the government of them ; and, therefore, can make them all subserve the purposes of His justice, power, wisdom, and of his unbounded goodness, by suspending, reversing, and even of altering those laws according to His own good pleasure. And He who has done this to establish beyond a doubt the authority of the Holy Scriptures, has given them an inscription which cannot be counterfeited, and drawn the lines of truth so deep that they cannot be erased. You may consult the Letters of some Portuguese Jews to Voltaire. They contain much useful matter upon this and some other subjects connected with the authority of the Books of the Old Testament.

LETTER V.

Geography.

To be thoroughly furnished with arguments from the external evidences of the truth of divine revelation, for a complete defence against the assaults of your adversaries, add to your other acquirements a knowledge of GEOGRAPHY. By having a general map of the world impressed upon your mind, you will have an intelligent view of those geographical notices so frequently mentioned in Scripture, and can comprehend, with greater accuracy, those historical details with which the book of God abounds. Geography is the handmaid of history, and therefore they must be constantly united together ; and they are two “great lights” which shed their mutual lustre upon the truths of divine revelation. By the aid of this science you can follow, with greater satisfaction, the flight of Abraham from his kindred, and mark the journeyings of Jacob and his sons ; can understandingly

trace the peregrinations of the Israelites through the "howling wilderness," till their final settlement in Canaan ; and can delightfully regale yourself among the hills and valleys of Palestine, amidst ancient prophets and bards, who spoke so loftily and sung so melodiously in the name of God. A knowledge of geography will fit you for a companion of the twelve Apostles in their missionary flights through the vast Roman Empire ; and you can alternately sail and walk with St. Paul through Greece, Spain, and Italy, and witness the prostration of idolatry before the progress and triumph of Christianity. With joy you may follow the banners of the cross, while they extend their peaceful influence over northern and southern latitudes, and eastern and western longitudes, and behold the "north and the south, the east and the west, resigning their sons and daughters to God." By the help of this science you can accompany the modern missionaries into the four quarters of the globe, see them enter the idolatrous temples of Asia, and gently draw their deluded priests and votaries from their bloody sacrifices to

the altar of the living and true God. You may tread the burning soil of Africa, the land of ignorance and oppression, and from thence wing your way through the kingdoms of Europe, the theatre of those mighty events which astonish the world ; and visit, in your imagination, those favoured cities where benevolence sits enthroned amidst opulence and luxury, exerting its godlike energies to send the hallowed Word to the ends of the earth. And after taking this mighty circuit, and minutely examining the places through which you pass, you may return to refresh yourself in the pleasant fields, shadowy groves, and populous cities and villages of your own happy land, in which, indeed, your joy and exultation may be moderated by roaming through the wilderness, and witnessing the degradation and wretchedness of our numerous Indian tribes.

But what, say you, has geography to do with the study of divinity ? Is a minister of Jesus Christ, whose principal work is to save souls, called upon to survey the world—to mark the latitude and longitude of places—to estimate the width and breadth, and to

notice the geographical and relative situations of kingdoms and empires—to distinguish between islands and continents, promontories, bluffs, isthmuses, capes, mountains, valleys, and plains—between seas, lakes, bays, gulfs, rivers, and fountains—to enumerate the number of inhabitants in the world, with their cities and villages? What has all this to do with divinity?

In reply I would ask, Has not God made all these things? And are they not perpetually alluded to in the Holy Scriptures? Should not, therefore, the minister of Christ, whose peculiar work is to explain and defend these writings, have some knowledge of those places to which geographical allusions are so frequently made? The world is the grand theatre on which the wondrous acts of the Almighty are portrayed, and which continually exhibits marks of His omnipotence, of His wisdom and goodness. And to have a comprehensive view of these, must we not have a knowledge of the extent, the boundaries, and the productions of the terraqueous globe? It is not only necessary that we understand the terms themselves,

but, as far as possible, the nature and situation of the things described. When we read of the “cedars of Lebanon,” of the “dew of Hermon,” of the “mountains of Ararat,” of the “city of Babylon, Nineveh, Tyre, and of Rome,” of the “deserts of Arabia,” or of the “land of Ham,” of the “river Euphrates,” and the “great” or Mediterranean sea, unless we have a geographical knowledge of those things and places, they are mere empty sounds to us ; but by spreading a map of the world before us, in which we behold their situation and extent, the understanding is fed, and faith strengthened. With the aid of this science, with what pious wonder and delight can we follow the Israelites from the haughty court of Pharaoh to Pi-hahiroth, and listen to their plaintive cries, while beholding the pursuit of their lordly taskmasters ; and with silent awe hear the inspiring words of their intrepid leader, “Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.” With them we may exult to find that the *Red sea*, or *Arabian gulf*, presents no barrier to their passage into the deserts of Arabia. And if

any caviler should ask us how we know that this course led them into that wilderness, we present him with a geographical description of the country. We may show him the mountains which rise on either side of the camp of the Israelites, and the strait over which they passed into the lonely desert ; and then point to the finger of God which led them on their way. And how completely have the geographical notices of modern travellers confirmed all that the Scriptures have asserted respecting this dreary desert, the land of Canaan, and the adjoining countries !

It is not merely for the purpose of understanding geography as a science, separately and independently considered, that I would have you make yourself acquainted with it ; but on account of the intimate connexion it has with the authenticity as well as illustration of the sacred writings, and for the purpose of affording you a comprehensive view of the unlimited perfections of Jehovah, as displayed in the works of His hands.

But it is unnecessary to enlarge upon this subject. Neither need you multiply

books. *Morse's Universal Geography*,* his *Gazetteer*, with a good *Atlas* always at hand, and the *Geographical Excursions by the Editor of Calmet*, will be quite sufficient for your purpose. I will only farther remark, that in reading history, your improvement in historical knowledge will depend much upon having a map continually before you, that you may survey the places of which you read, and mark their positive and relative situation.

Many other branches of knowledge might be mentioned, as having a collateral bearing upon the evidence and illustration of sacred Scripture. How does the knowledge, for instance, of ASTRONOMY, tend to enlarge

* In some of the first editions of the above work, the author betrayed his want of candour, especially in his account of the religious and moral state of Upper Canada. After remarking that "Methodism was the prevailing religion" in that province, he said, "Their preachers are illiterate, rude in their manners, and often exceptionable in their morals." And this assertion has been reiterated by other writers, particularly by *Mr. Parrish*, whose history has been mentioned above. Though this exceptionable passage is corrected in later editions, this notation of it may not be out of place, as many may possess the first edition who may never see the latter.

our view of the Creator's glory in his wonderful works ! If the " heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament show his handy work ;" if the sun, moon, and stars, proclaim His ineffable majesty, how must the pleasure of contemplating these heavens, these resplendent luminaries of day and night, be heightened by a knowledge of their number, of their magnitude, of their distance from each other, of their continual revolutions, and of their centripetal and centrifugal influence ! While the uninformed stupidly gaze upon these stupendous evidences of infinite power and wisdom, the devout astronomer looks with rapture, because they afford him a mirror by which the perfections of Jehovah are reflected upon his understanding. Hence the pithy saying of the Christian poet,

" An undevout astronomer is mad."

The scientific astronomer can reconcile the miraculous standing still of the sun upon Gibeon, and of the moon in the valley of Ajalon, with the modern system of Astronomy ;* and can prove that the darkness

* See Dr. A. Clarke on Joshua x, 12, 13.

mentioned by the Evangelists, as having taken place at the Saviour's crucifixion, was altogether supernatural. *Ferguson* will give you a compendious view of this sublime science.

Thus much for the external evidence of the authority of divine revelation. That course of study which leads to a just perception of the internal evidence, shall be attended to in the succeeding Letters. This shall be concluded by remarking, that the formal argument in defence of the truth of Christianity, should be used sparingly. To be perpetually dwelling upon it, betrays an affectation of learning not compatible with the modesty and gravity of the Christian ministry; and also supposes a doubtfulness in the hearer which he is not willing any should suspect him to indulge. The humane and skilful warrior will use his sword only when necessary to defend himself. In general, unless a course of lectures be appointed expressly for the purpose of establishing the divine authority of the sacred writings, it is best to take for granted that your hearers believe them; and, therefore,

instead of stopping to prove them true, urge their tremendous importance upon the consciences of your auditors. The majesty of truth will always command the reverence of the candid, and its inimitable charms, if permitted to shine in its own lustre, will attract the attention of the wise and good. Those who refuse to comply with its stern demands, leave to contend with the upbraiding language of their alarmed consciences in the best way they can.

LETTER VI.

Internal Testimony.

HAVING noticed the method of study suitable for collecting the external evidences of Christianity, we shall now touch upon its internal testimony.

1. There is a majesty, a simplicity, an energy, and a harmony in the Scriptures themselves, which forcibly proclaim the divinity of their origin. Such is the peculiarity of their style, that all efforts at imitation have been unavailing. Like the native

dignity and beauty of truth, the sacred Scriptures speak for themselves, declaring their own excellency to all who hear and understand their language. It would be an easy matter to select and to multiply passages, which, from the loftiness of their sentiments, the energy and sublimity of their language, the strength and harmony of their testimony, would carry a conviction, not only of their truth, but of their being *divine* truth. When God speaks, He speaks like Himself. His language is the language of wisdom, of authority, of goodness, as well as of truth. But you must make this selection for yourself, by familiarizing yourself with the whole Bible; and then, indeed, you will hardly know which to take and which to leave, such is the loftiness, the sublimity, the force and harmony of the whole.

2. The character of that Being whom the Scriptures reveal as the object of our worship, as our Creator, Redeemer and Preserver, is such as must strike the mind of every attentive beholder with an awful conviction of the truth of that revelation which unfolds Him to our view. Though it be admitted

that the mind of man is not adequate to form an idea of what the perfections of God should consist ; yet, when those perfections are made known, we immediately perceive them to be such as are every way worthy of the Creator and Governor of the universe. Like the rays of the natural sun, which carry a conviction of the existence of that grand instrument of natural light ; so the perfections of God, shining forth upon the human mind through the medium of divine revelation, convey a conviction of the existence of the Being from whom they emanate, as well as of the moral excellence of His character. The moment God proclaims Himself *as He is*, the mind of man bows before Him with reverence, and acknowledges Him as the *God over all, blessed for ever*.

3. The Scriptures are an exact mirror in which we see a picture of ourselves. All that is said in them of man, tallies exactly with what our daily experience and observation prove us to be. The resemblance is so striking, that we cannot withhold our assent from the Scriptural delineation.

tion of our characters. And who but He that perfectly knows the heart of man, could thus accurately describe it?

4. The admirable adaptation of that law revealed in the sacred Scriptures to the moral condition of man, its native tendency to promote individual and social happiness, is a forcible evidence of their truth. The justness of its requirements, the morality of its precepts, and the benevolent tendency of its spirit and design, evince the divinity of its origin.

5. All experience proves man to be a sinful being. The Scriptures recognise him as such; and this coincidence of testimony is a strong internal evidence of their truth. But they receive additional confirmation by revealing a method of pardon and of recovery to the forfeited favour of God, every way suited to the condition of man, and every way worthy of the infinite perfections of God. This opens a wide field for the range of the human mind to notice the footsteps of Almighty power, wisdom, and goodness.

This part of our subject embraces all the

doctrines and precepts of Christ. And such is their excellency, that they need only to be understood in order to be believed. When considered collectively, they are to the soul of man what a complete garment is to his body—they suit every trait of his moral character. To enter into an illustration of this point, would be to write a system of divinity. It is only necessary, therefore, to refer you to those authors who have already explained and enforced the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, that you may be a perfect man of God, thoroughly furnished unto every good work.

In doing this, your chief difficulty will be, from such a vast variety as we have, to select the best; for it is a waste of time, and tends to dissipate the mind, and to prevent it from exerting its own energies, to take an indiscriminate range through books upon divinity. No man, who knows the value of time, and the importance of improving every moment to the best advantage, will read any thing and every thing that comes in his way.

Stackhouse's Complete Body of Divinity, if you can have patience to plod through it,

will reward you for your labour ; and bating somewhat for the *peculiarities* of Calvinism, and the want of clearer views of *experimental* divinity, *Dr. Dwight's System of Theology* is worthy of a serious perusal. The *Christian Library*, collected by Mr. Wesley, is an excellent compilation ; containing the marrow of the writers on divinity of the 17th, and beginning of the 18th century. *Leland* and *Paley*, on the external and internal evidences of Christianity, may be read with profit ; and *Bogue* and *Bonnett* are lively and conclusive in their arguments ; while the *Gospel its own Witness*,* by *Fuller*, will

* It must be understood, that the author is not pledged for the approbation of *all* the sentiments contained in the books which he takes the liberty to recommend, even when no exceptions are made. It is to be expected that almost every writer, even while he endeavours to express the sentiments of the sect to which he belongs, will advance some things peculiar to himself, and which are therefore to be received or rejected according as the evidence which may appear for or against them. But, in the examination of authors, it is as necessary to guard against captiousness, especially in matters of minor importance, as it is to be scrupulously exact in adhering to what we consider to be the truth ; always remembering that the writer may have had as good an opportunity for correct information,

exhibit some of the superlative excellencies of Christianity, in proof of the divine authority of the Law and the Gospel. *Watson's Theological Institutes*, the first volume of which has just been published, supplies a desideratum in Christian theology hitherto much wanted.

Wesley's Works, and particularly his *Sermons*, contain the most comprehensive, the deepest, the most experimental and practical body of divinity to be found in the English language. Disdaining the ornaments of rhetoric, and despising the applause of man as

and be possessed of as much candour as ourselves. It would, indeed, be as idle to expect all men to think precisely alike on all subjects, and much more that they should express themselves in the same manner, as it would be to expect every man to look exactly alike. While every human being so far resembles his fellows as to be recognised as belonging to the same species, he will exhibit those individual peculiarities of countenance, gesture, and tone of voice, which distinguish him from every other man: Just so it is in the intellectual world;—there is that kind of harmonious opposition which constitutes the beauty, the excellency, as well as the oneness and integrity of truth, and which, though passing through a variety of moulds, exhibits marks of coming from the same source, and therefore possesses a homogeneousness of character.

the reward of his labours, he simply aimed at truth ; and when ascertained, he unfolded it in language chaste, energetic, perspicuous, and strong. His eloquence is the eloquence of truth, warmly addressed to the understandings and consciences of men. While he unfolds the attributes and perfections of God, displays the character and offices of the Redeemer, and points to the energies of the Holy Spirit as the efficient cause of every thing good, he lays open the nakedness and depravity of the human heart ; and he leaves you not until he leads you to the atoning blood, transforms you into the likeness of Christ, fills you with perfect love, takes you around the circle of all civil and religious duties, and opens to your enraptured soul the kingdom of ineffable glory. You cannot read him, if you have any taste for solid truth, for a chaste, an elegant and a classic style, for experimental and practical divinity, without profit and delight. He is never dull or insipid ; never dry and uninteresting ; but always lively, energetic, plain, and possesses the rare and happy talent of making you commune with your own heart

and with your God. Though his discourses are not written in a systematical order, yet they contain a concise and Scriptural view of every doctrine of the gospel, and explain, in a pointed and perspicuous manner, all the individual and social duties of man. For a correct knowledge of the great doctrines of God our Saviour, therefore, you need only read Wesley.

But for the sake of variety and general improvement, you may read also *Saurin* and *Masillon*. Saurin will inspire you with a spirit of sermonizing; and Masillon will teach you, in addition to a lofty and florid style—which is not best adapted to the pulpit—to analyze the human heart. *Blair* will furnish you with a worthy sample of language and of pulpit oratory; but he is not to be taken as a guide in divinity. His excellent colleague, *Walker*, will unite purity of style and sentiment, and teach you to mingle piety in all your public and private exercises. *Baxter* will make your soul revolve upon itself, and enter into a minute examination of all its desires, and motives, and actions.

The beloved, the able, the pious, and the indefatigable *Fletcher*, will instruct you in polemical divinity. Of all polemical writers, he is to be preferred for the spirit and manner in which he puts to flight his antagonists. Other writers may teach you the art of disputing; they may succeed in rescuing the truth from the mazes of error, and learn you how to wield a logical argument to the best advantage in defence of orthodoxy; but while *Fletcher* does all this in the most masterly manner, he makes you love and respect your adversary, and learns you to distinguish between the person of your combatant and the cause he has espoused. He does more—he makes you think meanly of yourself, brings you to the feet of the Saviour, makes you acquainted with your own heart, and gives you no rest until you surrender yourself entirely to the direction of that truth he so ably defends. In addition to this, he wakes up all the dormant faculties of your soul, makes you think, reason, deliberate, and decide, for yourself. While, impelled on by the force and impetuosity of his arguments, you are ready to leap on your

antagonist, and crush him beneath your feet, you are instantly arrested with a sight of yourself, of your weakness and dependance, and you are led to deplore those frailties of human nature which make men swerve from the truth ; and while compassion awakens in your breast, you are presented with the all-compassionate Saviour, who is ready to heal your wounds, and to strengthen you again for the combat. His “ Checks to Antinomianism,” though professedly controversial, and as such have shed a flood of light over the horizon of evangelical truth, are pervaded with a spirit of love ; and while your understanding is enriched with his lucid arguments, illustrated as they are by the most striking, lively, and apt metaphors and comparisons, your heart is inflamed with love to God and man. Read Fletcher, then, but do not forget Wesley.

For the defence of some of the particular doctrines of the gospel, you will select particular treatises. *Wesley on Original Sin*, and *Fletcher’s Appeal to Matter of Fact and Common Sense*, will fully evince the natural and hereditary depravity of man. *Wesley’s*

and *Coke's Sermons on the Divinity of Christ*, are both good. If you wish a more enlarged view of this momentous subject, *Wardlow on the Socinian Controversy* is the best. Horseley against Priestley may be read with interest and profit.

Study well this subject. It lies at the foundation of your system. It forms, in fact, the most prominent peculiarity of the Christian doctrine. Do not, therefore, let the enemy find you unprepared upon this point. Christ is God, or we are all a set of fools ; and Christianity is worse than nothing for perplexing the minds of men with contradictory notions about a thing of no importance. The doctrine of atonement, of the influence of the Holy Spirit, of regeneration, stands or falls with the divinity of Christ. But after all your reading, you will do well to remember that the doctrine is to be supported by plain, positive, Scripture testimony. Consult, therefore, all those texts which bear upon this point, for yourself, and have them always ready for use. *Thus saith the Lord*, is better than a thousand comparisons, reasonings, or human assertions.

On the doctrine of Repentance, Justification, and Sanctification, you can find no authors who have illustrated those subjects with greater clearness and accuracy, than Wesley and Fletcher. If you wish to heighten the beauty, and enhance the worth, of truth, by contrasting it with its opposite, you may find shades enough—Calvin, Edwards, and Hopkins, will each contribute his share. You need not, however, reject what is good in these authors on account of the bad. *Sherlock upon Providence and on Death*, and *Porteus' Lectures*, contain much excellent matter. *Sellon* will help you to many useful hints on the Calvinistic controversy; but his pen was not dipt so deep in the oil of love as was that of Fletcher. *Taylor* and *Law* will teach you the art of holy living; and *Baxter*, while he opens your understanding, and makes you think and reason, winds around your heart, makes you ashamed of sin, and forces you to pronounce condemnation upon spiritual sloth; and, if you be not past hope, awakens all your faculties to holy meditation and prayer. His *Reformed Pastor* is a two-edged sword.

It is neglected merely because it is too sharp !

On the subject of *Infant Baptism*, Wesley, Edwards, Moore, and Merritt, will be sufficient.

If you have made a good use of your time, and have sedulously consulted the principal part of the authors already recommended, you will be able to select for yourself such miscellaneous reading as may be necessary for your continual improvement. *A Dictionary of Arts and Sciences should be in your possession. The New Edinburgh Encyclopædia is the most impartial.* But if, after all, you contract no relish for study, and are making no advances in wisdom and knowledge, I advise you to give up the pursuit, and return to some employment that is more congenial to your mental taste. Never think of palming yourself upon the public as a teacher of religion, when you yourself will not be taught.

It may seem somewhat strange to some that we should include all the doctrines of the gospel among the internal evidences of Christianity. The reason is, that we con-

sider all truth as shining by its own light. It only needs to be exhibited and to be perceived, in order to be embraced. Let, therefore, Christianity be presented to the mind in its own native lustre, and it will convince every intelligent mind of its truth and importance. It is only because its peculiar glories have been either hid or obscured, by the smoke and dust of error, that it has been rejected. Let this bright Sun of truth but show itself, and its divine glories will eclipse the glory of every other system of religion, and make its truth and excellency be felt by the weight of its own internal testimony.

LETTER VII.

Biography.

CHRISTIANITY lives and shines in the lives and conduct of its possessors. Hence the utility of Christian BIOGRAPHY. This, therefore, is another department of study which will engage the attention of the Christian minister.

The Scriptures abound with biographical sketches ; and these are the best, because the most impartial. You have not only the excellencies, but also the defects of the characters there exhibited. In reading the Holy Scriptures, therefore, you will do well to notice all the peculiarity, the variety, and the contrariety of character which they delineate. If you would make a just estimate of the human character, you must view it as it *is*, and not from any fanciful or partial representation of it, which may have been dictated by the warmth of friendship, or by the heat of malice ; and this impartial delineation is to be found, in its greatest perfection, in the Holy Scriptures. And what enhances the value of Scripture Biography is, that it is composed of facts and incidents which are introduced by the writer to perfect his narration, and not from any desire to eulogize the hero of the story. No laboured panegyric, with a view to emblazon the virtues of a favourite hero, appears upon the page of inspiration.

Who can view the dignified, the courteous, the self-denying, the intrepid, and the disin-

terested character and conduct of *Abraham*; the pious and faithful conduct of *Lot*; the bold, the innocent, and meek, the wise and faithful, the determined and persevering conduct of *Moses*, in the various situations and relations of life which he sustained; of the conduct of *Joshua*, the courageous man of God; of *Samuel*, the faithful prophet and the impartial judge; of *Saul*, though tinctured with a mixture of good and bad, of wisdom and folly; of *David*, of *Solomon*, of *Daniel*, with many others so faithfully and impartially portrayed in the sacred Scriptures;—Who, I say, can study the life and actions of such personages, without being both wiser and better?

CHRIST is a perfect example. To trace Him through all his life, to witness his triumphant death, and to behold his resurrection, affords one of the most instructive lessons of biography to be found on the records of time. And let us remember, that He has said, **LEARN OF ME.**

The lives of the apostles, both before and after the crucifixion, exhibit a striking picture of human nature in its various appearances

of weakness, of timidity, of strength, of boldness, and of daring intrepidity. In all the biographical notices recorded in the Scriptures, on account of the fidelity of the writer, we are continually presented with the ever-varying shades of the human character; sometimes struggling through weakness, and often, in the midst of discouraging obstacles, through grace triumphing over them all; at other times overcome and defeated by what might seem trifling considerations. And while we behold the saints of God surmounting every difficulty and conquering every foe, we see the malice of their enemies exemplifying itself in pouring contempt, and by inflicting torments, upon them.

All history; indeed, continually presents us with men and women, exhibiting their peculiar excellencies and defects, and all that variety of character, of which human nature is susceptible; and hence history becomes one of the most interesting and instructive departments of study.

But, in addition to the scattered fragments of biography found on the pages of general history, there are biographies of particular

persons, written especially to perpetuate their goodness or greatness, that succeeding generations might emulate their virtues, and thus profit by their example ; and so numerous are they, that it seems almost needless to mention them. But, as a Christian minister, you ought to be acquainted more especially with all those eminent men who have employed their time and talents in defence of Christianity. The history of the Reformation will unfold such men as *Wickliffe, Huss, Jerome, Luther, Calvin, Zuinglius, Knox, Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley, &c*, who dared the relentless fury of popish superstition and bigotry. And in looking at them, you cannot but see their enemies ; and thus, from a contrasted view of human nature, you will experience the alternate excitement of admiration and disgust, of joy and of sorrow. Neither will it be a waste of time to acquaint yourselves with those men who have shone in the galaxy of literature, and have shed a lustre upon the moral world by their philosophical researches. This will afford an instructive lesson, by showing you the gradual developement of the human mind

in its pursuit after truth. Who can contemplate such characters as Leibnitz, Locke, Bacon, Johnson, Newton, Reid, &c, without feeling an involuntary desire to emulate them, as far as is consistent with the higher claims which the science peculiar to our profession has upon us, in their literary pursuits? This kind of biography combines the history of MIND, in its varied progress from infancy to manhood, with the history of science, and the dominion it exercises over the destinies of mankind.

And if we wish to see human nature in all its varied forms, we must not exclude from our notice statesmen and warriors. Who that have read of the mighty achievements of the latter part of the last, and the beginning of the present, century, but would wish to acquaint themselves with those characters who have stood upon the theatre, and have either been the principal actors, or have secretly moved the machinery? Hence the lives of such men as Pitt, Nelson, Washington, Franklin, Buonaparte, &c, &c, must afford a most interesting and impressive lesson of instruction

to all who wish to see the varied hues of the human character. Neither should we be ignorant of those who have exerted their influence to destroy the holy child Jesus. Many such there have been ; and by having a knowledge of their character, and of the manner in which they have endeavoured to effect their nefarious designs, we shall be the better able to guard ourselves against their rude assaults. The dark designs and diabolical deeds of those who formed the *Illuminati* of France, such as Wieshaupt, Rousseau, Voltaire, Volney, and their associates ; as well as Hume, Bolingbroke, Paine, and others of the like character, should be known, that we may be qualified, when called to it, for the vindication of truth ; for it is sometimes necessary to look error in the face, in order to heighten the beauties, and to enhance the value of truth. Most of the Encyclopædias record the biography of all the noted characters, whether good or bad, which have figured in the world.

But, as a minister of Christ, and as a member of His mystical body, you will be most delighted in tracing the experience, in

witnessing the success, and in sympathizing with the sufferings, as well as rejoicing in the final triumph of the faithful witnesses of Jesus, and especially of those messengers of His who have advocated and advanced His cause. *Fox's Book of Martyrs* will exhibit a number of such. In the *Life of Wesley* you will have an example of a man, richly adorned with almost every science, and matured with every grace of the Holy Spirit, vigorously and successfully exerting all his powers for the present and future happiness of mankind. In *Fletcher* you will see a combination of excellencies, literary, moral, intellectual, and spiritual, uniting to set forth the purity and amiableness of the Christian character. Unless a criminal indifference has benumbed your soul to every thing pure and good, you can read neither of them without feeling a holy ambition, an ardent thirst, for the attainment of an enlightened piety, an unreserved devotion to God, and a burning love to the souls of men. The quick, the animated, and the indefatigable, as well as the pious and zealous *Coke*, will teach you to frown upon every thing little

and miserly, and to condemn indolence and inactivity. And oh *Asbury* ! how do we blush when thy journals tell us of thy labours, of thy sufferings, of thy perils by sea and land, and among false brethren ! What an example for our modern missionaries ! The American Methodist preachers will long revere thy virtues ; and while they read thy pages, will lift their hearts to God in devout thankfulness for having inspired thee with courage and perseverance in the cause of thy adorable Master. *Swartz*, *Brainerd*, and *Elliot*, as well as the philanthropic *Howard*, will each contribute his share of instructive piety and persevering zeal. Honest *John Nelson* will teach you courage ; *Thomas Walsh* will inspire you with prayer and devotion ; and teach you how to combine literary pursuits with the most fervent piety ; while *Bacon* and *Martyn* will administer consolation in the midst of discouragements and difficulties. It is needless to enumerate more. Your own judgment will direct you to those which are the most suitable. If, however, you wish to see female excellence shine forth in the splendour of

Christianity, besides those recorded in Scripture and general history, read Jane Cooper, Hester Ann Rogers, Mrs. Fletcher, and Lady Maxwell.

But are these to be enumerated among the internal evidences of Christianity? Unquestionably! What more forcible evidence can we have of the truth of any doctrine, than to see it exemplified in the spirit and conduct of its professed disciples? This is a living, a moving, a perpetual monument, known and read of all men, of the truth and reality of the Christian religion. Have you not heard, have you not read, time after time, that Christianity is a fable? And why? Because of the manifest inconsistency between its principles and professors. Say the objectors, "Christianity requires us to be holy, to be meek, humble, grave, honest, just, merciful; but we daily witness its professed believers to be unholy, proud, high-minded, light and vain, dishonest in their dealings, unjust in their contracts, and unmerciful in their conduct; and therefore there is neither truth in their principles nor honesty in their professions." Now exhibit

to them those men in whom all the Christian principles exerted an active influence, in whom its graces shone with conspicuous splendour, and you present them with a most commanding evidence in favour of the truth of Christ and of His doctrine. Present them with a man, who, like Paul the apostle, has felt the renovating power of the Holy Ghost, and whose after life has corresponded to the doctrines and precepts of Christ, and you disarm infidelity itself, and strip the objector of his last weapon which he wields against your religion.

And even the lives of its enemies declare in its favour. In regard to some of the most eminent philosophical and literary men since the establishment of Christianity, they have been its warm admirers and able defenders ; while many of the others, particularly its bold defamers, have, in their lives, evinced the necessity of Christianity to reform them ; and in their deaths, have proved its truth by the moral darkness, distress, and doubts, with which they have passed from time to eternity !

The manner in which *Julian* the apostate,

Hume, the infidel philosopher, *Hobbes*, the gloomy skeptic, *Voltaire*, the facetious, but inveterate foe to Christianity, *Rousseau*, the philosophical profligate, and *Paine*, the vulgar apostate from the truth, all died, is a sufficient confirmation of the truth of these remarks. But if any should object, that there have been many, who, under the profession of Christianity, have disgraced their lives by intemperance and profaneness, (and that there have been such who can deny ?) and consequently sunk under a gloomy cloud into eternity ; the answer is easy ; they believed the doctrines of Christianity with the same indifference with which they believed any other truth in which they felt little or no interest ; but they did not so believe it as to have it affect their hearts and lives. *They held the truth in unrighteousness*, living and dying without any experience of the transforming power of truth on their hearts.

LETTER VIII.

Philosophy—Natural and Moral.

IN addition to those branches of knowledge already mentioned, there are others which have a claim upon your attention. PHILOSOPHY, including both natural and moral science, is a department of study highly important to the biblical student.

By *Natural Philosophy*, we understand the natural history of the universe, including the different *genera*, and the several *species* of *animated* nature, from man down to the lowest reptile or smallest animalcule ; also the history of *inanimate* creation, comprehending the various productions of sea and land, with the various uses, as far as can be ascertained, of each fossil, plant, or vegetable, describing the simple elements of which compounded bodies are composed. How vast the study of nature ! How great, therefore, nature's God ! Every *reader* of the Bible knows how frequently these things are

referred to in the Scriptures ; and that, without some acquaintance with them, it is not possible to understand the point of the numerous allusions which are made to animals, to vegetables and fossils, by the inspired writers. To be able to understand, in some tolerable degree, how the great laboratory of nature, like a skilful alchemist, continually carries on its operations by causes and instruments which, to be sure, often elude the sight of human eyes, must produce the profoundest reverence for the infinite skill of the adorable Author of nature, and not a little strengthen our belief in the divinity of that Book, in which these great principles of nature are perpetually recognised. And the deeper we dive into this profound abyss, the more diffident shall we be of our own powers, while we shall be filled with admiration of the grand displays of God's immeasurable wisdom, power, and goodness.

When an allusion is made in the Holy Scriptures, to those things with which we are familiar, we are immediately struck with its aptness, and are instructed by the illus-

tration ; and if we were as well acquainted with all the other *natural* productions and curiosities, as well as the *artificial* works of man, to which reference is made by metaphor and allegory, we should be no less edified and delighted, with the justness of the comparison, or the fitness of the allegory. But the limits we have prescribed to ourselves, in these remarks, will not allow us to particularize. This you must do for yourself ; and you cannot open the Book of God, without discovering these perpetual references to the various productions of nature, to animals and vegetables, and, indeed, to all the elements of nature ; and which are used by the inspired writers to illustrate some point of doctrine, to enforce some duty, or to inspire faith in some promise, or to render some threatening more tremendous in its aspect.

The *Fragments* added to the latest editions of CALMET, contain much useful and curious matter illustrative of the natural history of the Bible. If the Editor has erred at all in his numerous elucidations, it has been by indulging too frequently in conjec-

tures, and by endeavouring to lower down the majesty of miraculous interpositions to the common operations of the laws of nature. But every reader must exercise his own judgment on whatever author he may consult. *Harmer's Observations* are a valuable acquisition for a literal interpretation of many passages of Scripture which have a reference to the philosophy of the Bible. Many systems of natural philosophy have been written; but perhaps *Ray's Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation*, *Goldsmith's Animated Nature*, and *Wesley's Philosophy*, are among the best. If, however, you wish to see this subject more fully exemplified, you may consult *Buffon*,* who is a lively writer, and to whom Goldsmith acknowledges many obligations. *Wesley's Philosophy*† possesses one excellence, to

* What a pity this great naturalist should have allowed himself to offend the good taste of his readers by the use of unchaste language.

† The late edition of *Wesley's Philosophy*, published at the Book Room, has been revised, and its principles accommodated to the modern improvements in this department of science. The name of the author of this work is sufficient of itself to give it celebrity among

which the others have not an equal claim ; it directs all its researches to one determinate end, namely, the display of the perfections of God in His wonderful works. What a pity that all writers did not keep this end in view ! For what is nature but the “art of God ?” And what are all the works of men, but so many emanations of God’s glory shining forth through their minds, and reflected from the work of his hands ? At any rate, this should be the end to be kept steadily in view by every biblical student in all his philosophical researches. The creative skill and ever acting agency of God must be seen in all his works and ways. *Newton* was both a philosopher and a Christian. And that a deep knowledge of the laws of nature has a tendency to fill the mind with devout acknowledgments of the great SUPREME, is evinced by the effect

those qualified to appreciate his worth ; and what might tend to give it still additional celebrity, is, that many things which were inserted by Mr. Wesley merely as conjectural, the improvements since made in the science by numerous experiments, have proved true. Some of these are noticed in the course of the work by its reviser.

which his astonishing discoveries produced on *his* expanded mind. It is said that he never pronounced the name of God without a solemn pause ! How wonderful the works of God ! “ In wisdom hast thou made them all.”

The next branch of Philosophy is called MORAL. It treats of MIND—Of God, of angels, of men—and endeavours to ascertain the duties of moral beings to each other, from their mutual relations. This was the science which so deeply engaged the attention of the ancient philosophers. They delighted in analyzing man, and in developing the powers of his mind. And I need not observe that, however accurately they might have described man, and however highly they estimated his abilities, or his intellectual attainments, they found him too feeble to ascertain the perfections of the Almighty. Of this they have given sufficient proofs in their own theories on theology.

On this branch of philosophy, the world abounds with treatises. From *Aristotle* down to *Stewart*, there has been almost a continual stream of it flowing through the land ;

until it finally settled in the stagnant pool of *Hume's* theory of *successive impressions* and barefaced Atheism ! A *Beattie* and a *Reid* arose to rescue it from this fatal catastrophe, and to restore it to that *reality* and *activity*, which render it a suitable companion for the *reasonable* and *active* soul of man. In these two authors you have the philosophy of *Common Sense*, and are enabled to behold man as he is, and not in those fantastical robes with which an ideal and mock philosophy would array him. You need not, however, omit *Locke* ; though Reid, as a writer has observed, is to be preferred, "because he had the sagacity to detect the errors of Locke." *Reid's Essays on the Intellectual and Active Powers of Man*, ought to grace the library of every Christian minister ; but you need not set Reid against Reid, by incorporating the notes of the Boston editors. Let Reid speak for himself, and he will speak a more intelligible language, more in accordance with the dictates of common sense, than any of his interpreters. The judicious critic may add something to this light ; but the invidious and snarling sciolist

will only "darken counsel, by words without knowledge." *Stewart*, though justly much admired, sinks, in the opinion of the writer, far beneath his predecessor and teacher in the philosophy of the mind, both in the clearness of his perceptions, the perspicuity and energy of his language, and in the justness and truth of some of his sentiments. *Stewart*, however, as well as *Cogan*, may be read with profit and delight. *Beattie's Moral Science*, and his *Treatise on the Immutability of Truth*, should occupy the same shelf with *Reid's Essays*. And if you wish to see the sentiments of these eminent philosophers corroborated by one of your own countrymen, you may look into *Smith's Lectures on Political and Moral Science*. More you need not add.

The utility and importance of making moral philosophy a particular branch of study, will appear evident, when it is considered that God addresses man as a moral being; as a being possessing a capacity to understand, and to do His will, because he is a free moral agent, capable of willing or nilling according to his own pleasure. And

as this science teaches him to analyze his own powers, to ascertain the various rights of individuals, of communities, of nations, the numerous duties which originate from his religious, civil, and political relations; and explains and enforces, as far as it is able to do, all the great principles of moral duty to God and man; it has an imperious demand upon the attention of all those who would successfully instruct mankind in the great doctrines of God our Saviour. And it affords indescribable satisfaction to the biblical student, to find that all the individual and social rights and duties, which are recognised in the profoundest treatises of moral science, are clearly revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and are enforced by the strongest of all possible motives. And perhaps it may not be unimportant to observe, that this consideration, of the perfect accordance of the deductions of scientific men, who have derived their conclusions from the invariable relations of moral beings to each other, with the declarations of inspiration, is no inconsiderable argument in favour of the divine authority of Holy Scripture. At

least, it is certain that no man can reasonably reject a book, which recognises the same principles, and enforces the same duties, which he himself thinks he has discovered originating from the nature of God and man, and from the mutual relations existing among rational and intelligent beings. How far the best treatises on Moral Science may be indebted to revelation for their truest sentiments, and for their knowledge of the immutable principles of moral duty, is a question which need not be discussed here. From whatever source the light may have descended, it is all important that we should avail ourselves of its benefits.

Logic, as a branch of Moral Philosophy, has some claim upon your attention. Though custom, often the slave of folly, has nearly banished from modern composition the formal use of the syllogistical art, as displaying too much stiffness and affectation, yet the principles of Logic ought to be understood. Although there are many who can reason conclusively, who know not any of the technical terms of the art, it by no means follows that a knowledge of the system of Logic is useless.

To be able to distinguish between a sound argument and a sophism, so as to lay your hand upon the fallacy, and to tear the sophism in pieces, is highly important for a defence of the truth, and especially when you have to deal with a subtle adversary, who prides himself in his scholastic attainments. “And there are many adversaries gone forth into the world, whose mouths must be stopped.” It is true, that a simple query, somewhat in the Socratic method of disputation, may often do better in exposing the fallacy of a sophistical argument, than a laboured refutation clothed in the majesty of logical precision ; but, to know how to use the former to advantage, you must not be ignorant of the latter.

Reid will give you a Compendium of Aristotle’s System of Logic, which, however, will require some attention to understand the reason of its high celebrity in the scientific world. *Duncan* is much admired : but for a plain, easy, and intelligible statement and illustration of the principles of Logic, *Watts* is to be preferred. He wrote for the benefit and instruction of mankind, and not for the

purpose of displaying the profoundness of his knowledge, or the extensiveness of his literary attainments. *Wesley* has a short Treatise upon Logic, which, on account of its shortness, is somewhat obscure to those who have not had the advantage of a teacher.

Perhaps it is hardly necessary to repeat here, what has already been suggested more than once, that whatever branch of study you are pursuing, the Holy Scriptures will be your daily companion, and *prayer* and *holy living* your daily employment. For after all our attainments in literature, unless the “unction of the Holy One” give energy to our word, and a correspondent example enforce our precepts, we cannot disarm the sinner of his objections to Christianity, nor confirm the believer in *his most holy faith*. The studies I have recommended are to be considered only as subservient auxiliaries to the *pure word of truth*, which, to be efficient in our mouth, must be *like fire shut up in our bones*, producing, by its vehement flame, a constant, an ardent thirst for the salvation of men. Then, indeed, the word of the Lord will be like a *hammer* to break in

pieces the hard heart, like *balm* to assuage the pains of an accusing conscience, and like *oil* to sooth the mind of the sincere believer.

LETTER IX.

Rhetoric, or Pulpit Oratory.

It will doubtless be expected that I should recommend the study of RHETORIC, or at least of *Pulpit Oratory*. This I would most gladly do, if I perfectly knew how. I will, however, submit a few observations on this head, which, perhaps, may not be altogether useless. The whole of what I have to say on this subject may be comprehended in two words, BE NATURAL. Every child, of common capacity, is both an orator and a physiognomist. Hence the facility with which children awaken our sympathy and excite our affection.

Oratory is nothing more nor less than the undisguised and unaffected expression of the sentiments and passions of the heart. This may be done either with or without words.

Hence children before they have learned the use of these artificial signs of ideas, will, by their natural tones of oratory, exhibit all the latent passions of the heart, whether of sorrow or joy, pain or pleasure, love or hate, and in such a forcible manner too, as to attract attention almost irresistibly. And no sooner do they begin to make observations, than they will watch the countenance of their parent or nurse, as if anxious to ascertain the disposition of their guardian, noticing a frown or a smile, with all the particularity with which an attentive physiognomist would mark the expression of your countenance, with a view to ascertain your present feelings towards them. These infantile and instinctive gestures, and these first symptoms of reason, however forcibly or feebly expressed, exhibit an evidence of the accuracy of the above observation, that oratory is but the natural expression of the sentiments of the heart ; and that infants evince early traits of genuine eloquence. I would, therefore, put you into the nursery, and place you under the tuition of a little child, in order to teach you Rhetoric. How

eloquent was the little child which Jesus placed in the midst of the people, in order to teach his disciples how they should be qualified to enter the kingdom of heaven !

Why then, it may be asked, is not every man an orator ? The answer is obvious. Some are marred through bashfulness, some by unsuccessful efforts to imitate others, some by following those artificial rules which are not founded in nature ; and a multitude are ruined by contracting in their youth awkward gestures, affected habits ; while others, to avoid the appearance of enthusiasm, restrain those lofty and ardent feelings which the nature of their subject is calculated to produce. But *no* man can be eloquent on a subject in which he feels not deeply interested. Hence many are criminally defective in genuine pulpit oratory, because their own hearts are not warmed and inspired with the truths which their lips utter. The appearance of a large audience, in which are supposed to be men of science and taste, while it inspires some with the spirit of eloquence, binds others down with timidity, and deprives them of the ability

to exercise with freedom their own powers. Through these and such like means, many who otherwise might have warmed all around them with the eloquence of truth, have been doomed to drawl out their lives in a monotony of dull sounds, which neither affect themselves nor any one else.

As already observed, unless a man *feels* the solemn weight and importance of the subject on which he speaks, it is not possible he should be eloquent. It is a lamentable fact, that while the mountebank upon the stage, inspired by an ardent thirst for fame, and feeling the strong impetus of pecuniary advantage, will make the sentiments and passions of his author his own, and express himself so appropriately as to excite in his audience the alternate passions of love and hate, of sorrow and joy, pleasure and pain, of admiration and disgust; the preacher of righteousness, though possessing all the advantages of the supreme grandeur of his subject, sinks even below mediocrity: while the former astonishes you with the pathos of his manner, the latter either pains you with disgust or lulls you to sleep, by indulging in

all the *sang froid* of a cold calculating philosopher ; his whole demeanour declaring that he feels—if he feels at all—as if neither himself nor his hearers had any part or lot in the matter.

This, however, is not the case with all. We have our Christian orators, who, inspired with the Spirit of their Master, (*who spoke as never man spake,*) acting under a consciousness of their high calling and tremendous responsibility, pour forth the unrestrained effusions of hearts replete with love to God and man, while their hearers confess, by their sobs and groans, that their speaker “is sufficiently eloquent.” Indeed, when a minister of Christ *feels* the infinite importance of his subject, when it *presses* upon his soul as involving the everlasting interests of himself and his listening auditory, though he be naturally “rude in speech,” he will be eloquent. He will, indeed, as one observes, “forget method, forget order, he will forget himself,” being lost in the tremendous importance of his subject, and carried out of himself in search of the lost souls with which he is surrounded. With what majesty does

such a man appear ! He preaches not himself, but Jesus Christ. His theme inspires him. His inspiration is from above. His whole soul is wrapt up in the sublimity, the depth, the tremendous solemnities of his subject ! The gestures of his body, the expression of his eyes, the very muscles of his face, all have a tongue, while the tongue itself pours forth a torrent of eloquence which overwhelms his congregation by its impetuous force. How diminutive, in comparison to such a man, does the dull reader appear, pleasing himself with the eloquence of his well-turned periods, and playing with the harmony of his sentences, and priding himself upon the high literary character of his composition !

But if this man have, in addition to a sense of the immense weight of his subject, a comprehensive view of the grand system of redemption and salvation, a command of appropriate language ; if his mind be imbued with useful knowledge, and has not through timidity or a wrong use of artificial rules, contracted an unnatural stiffness and awkwardness of manner and enunciation, but

has command of himself as well as his subject; he will always exhibit that kind of eloquence which will command attention and produce effect. Truth, instead of freezing upon his lips, will warm his whole soul, sanctify and enliven every passion of his heart, and produce correspondent emotions in his audience. He will be less attentive,—though not entirely inattentive,—to the beauty and elegance of language, than he will to the clearness of his perceptions, the simplicity of his doctrines, and the perspicuity of his illustrations, and the force of his appeals to the understandings and consciences of his hearers. A man who clearly comprehends his subject, is master of his own thoughts, and communicates them in chaste and appropriate language, will rarely fail,—if a becoming earnestness evince the interest he feels in the subject,—to succeed in arresting the attention of his auditory, or of awakening their minds to serious reflection.

But of all the disgusting practices which a man can exhibit in the pulpit, *mimickry* is the most disgusting. I once sat under one

of those good meaning souls, and was alternately chilled and heated ; and sometimes, from writhing and twisting, in order to give a sort of playfulness to my feelings, I must have exhibited gesticulations as awkward as my recondite speaker ; for the good-natured creature was now aping A., then B. ; now assuming the voice of C., then D. ; and in some moments of forgetfulness, when his subject seemed to call off his attention from his numerous prototypes, he spoke in his natural tone, which, indeed, was far from being disagreeable ; but when he came to the lisping sound of S, when an uncommon effort was visible to imitate a favourite speaker, the teeth and tongue, coming in close and continued contact, made such a hissing noise, that I was almost thrown from my balance, by a strange association of ideas ! “ Thinks I to myself,” when was he imported from Africa, that he should yet be so much like the monkey breed ? Or does he think we are all such a set of fools as to be pleased with these apish tricks ? But another thought happily passed my mind, which saved me from the severe

mortification I must have felt from exposing my weakness before so numerous and respectable a congregation : a tear was substituted for the rising laugh, when I thought of the great and striking contrast between the awful subject of which he was treating and the manner in which it was treated. I thought what a pity that a cause in which the Saviour of the world bled, for which apostles and saints have been burned, should be thus degraded, thus trifled with, by exhibiting over it the disgusting airs of a mimicking mountebank ! What rendered him more ridiculous still was, when he seemed the most engaged in this kind of spiritual quackery, he seemed the most elated with himself, as though he was then displaying the pre-eminent qualities of the finished orator. I could but think, what a pity this man would not for a moment prefer himself to all others, however exalted those others might be in his own estimation ; at least so far as to be *natural*.

Be *yourself*, then, however ugly that self may be. Another man's coat will not suit you, however well it may sit on his shoulders.

But still, you will not be contented, I suppose, unless you have rules. Well, then, first *study yourself*. 2. *Understand your subject*. 3. *Feel its importance*. 4. *Keep master of yourself*—that is, be not depressed by timidity, nor swoln with self-confidence and vanity. 5. While you derive all the knowledge you can from every source, and especially from all you hear and read, make no efforts to imitate any man, neither in his gestures, the intonations of his voice, nor the peculiar enunciation of his words. 6. *Set God always before you*; and as if standing upon the threshold of eternity, labour as though this might be your last effort to save those who now hear you. And if you must have artificial helps, study *Blair, Campbell, Maury, Knox, and Wesley*.

But, above all, if you would succeed in accomplishing the all-important end of your mission, be most solicitous for the *holy anointing*. While it is said of Stephen that “he was a good man,” it is added, that he was “*full of faith and of the Holy Ghost*.” It is, indeed, the inspiration of the Holy Ghost which gives to a minister a just claim

to his peculiar office, and which fits him for the efficient and successful discharge of its highly interesting duties. Thus qualified he preaches not with "enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." His word cuts its way to the sinner's heart; and he confesses that God is with His minister of a truth. In the fulness of his heart he pours forth the strains of divine truth, and his doctrine distils as the "dew upon the grass, and as the rain upon the tender herb."

It might be asked, "What has this to do with the evidence of Christianity?" What has this to do with it! Is it no evidence of the truth of a doctrine for its professed advocate to preach as if he believed it? How many skeptics have been, as they have thought, confirmed in their perpetual doubtings, by the cold indifferent *manner* in which truths of such acknowledged importance have been delivered? How disgusting to an intelligent mind to see a man in the pulpit apparently more attentive to himself than to his subject, and mumbling over the tremendous truths of God with less pathos than

a schoolboy would read his lesson ! And is it not more disgusting still to see a *proud* man recommending *humility*, a *stiff*, *haughty* man, praising the virtues of *gentleness* and *meekness*, a *hard-hearted*, *unconverted* man, urging the necessity of *penitence* and *conversion*, and a *covetous* man recommending the virtue of *benevolence* ? If hypocrisy and inconsistency be contemptible in any one, it is most assuredly so in a professed ambassador of God. Let, then, the evidence of truth show itself in the sincerity, the earnestness, and lowliness of your manner, that those who hear you may credit the sincerity of your own faith.

LETTER X.

Poetry.

It may be expected that the Poets will occupy a place in your library. They ought not, indeed, to be wholly excluded. But the hill of *Parnassus* is lofty, and of somewhat difficult ascent, so that but few have attained the high honour of a commanding station

upon its melodious brow. Its sides indeed are perforated in many a place by those who have scrambled along them, in hopes of penetrating to the *Castalian Spring*; but their temerity has been punished by the Patron of the Muses, for attempting to tread on forbidden ground. You will not, therefore, be dabbling with every pretender to this sublime art. And even among those who stand unrivalled for poetical genius, you have need to make your selection with caution, on account of the impurity of some of their sentiments, and the vulgarity of some of their words; but the greatest danger is where doubtful sentiments and even most reprehensible doctrines are blended with sublime strains of poetry, and with purity and elegance of language. Even the pure and delicious waters of Zion have been rendered tasteless and even sickening, by being blended, in the corrupt imagination of the Poet, with the turbid waters of heathenism, or incautiously mixed with the muddy streams of merely terrestrial origin.

Horace stands confessed among the *Latins* as a Poet of the most elevated genius.

But while he has enlivened his Poems with all the fire of poetical genius, and graced them with all the flowers and elegance of human language, he has frequently degraded the majesty of his subject by the vulgarity, and, not unfrequently, indecency of his thoughts. What a pity that our youth should be led through this muddy stream, in order to arrive at a knowledge of a language now almost useless to the greater proportion of the world. For this heathen Poet, *Francis* will furnish you with an English dress cleansed from some of his impurities.

Homer among the *Greeks* stands unrivalled on account of the sublimity and energy of his poetry ; and he is certainly much more chaste than the Latin Poet. *Pope* and *Cowper* have both opened a way by which the mere English scholar may approach the high hill of Olympus, and listen to the harmonious numbers and the undulating notes of this father of the Grecian Poets. It is, however, chiefly on account of the poetry that you will be induced to read him, unless it be for the purpose of ascertaining a more correct knowledge of heathen mythology, and

of heathen morality, and of contrasting them to greater advantage with the sublime, the simple, the consistent, and the pure theology of the gospel. You may, indeed, have your imagination fired by reading of

“That wrath which hurl’d to Pluto’s gloomy reign
The souls of mighty chiefs untimely slain ;
Whose limbs, unburied on the naked shore,
Devouring dogs and hungry vultures tore.”

But while you may admire the genius of the Poet, when he assembles

“The gods in council on the starry hall,”

and view the goddess flying

——“Swift o’er Olympus’ hundred hills,”

to summon the imaginary deities of the poet, who

——“in long procession came
To Jove’s eternal adamant dome,”

you will not be much edified or delighted with his vivid description of the

——“fierce rage and pale affright”

of contending, snarling, and warring deities, who sport themselves with human blood and human misery. And neither will the doughty champion, the poet’s admired hero of the story, the wrathful Achilles, please you much

better—whose enduring wrath made even his bosom friend say to him ;—

“ No amorous hero caused thy birth,
Nor ever tender goddess brought thee forth :
Some rugged rock’s hard entrails gave thee form,
And raging seas produced thee in a storm.
A soul well suiting that tempestuous kind,
So rough thy manners, so untamed thy mind,— ”

This description, indeed, is characteristic of those hardy virtues so famous among the ancient statesmen and warriors. But while you are ranging through those fields of Grecian literature, pause a moment to contrast virtuous *heathens* with virtuous *Christians*. While *Achilles* smarts and rages under the lash of his sovereign’s injustice, and sullenly indulges in cold-blooded malice against even his own countrymen who are bleeding under the Trojan’s sword, *St. Paul*, instructed in the school of Christ, though far worse treated by his own countrymen, pours forth all the sympathies of a soul swelling with grief and love, even wishing himself “ accursed from Christ for his brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh.”

Virgil, though you only hear him through Dryden’s voice, will awaken all the musical

powers of your soul. You cannot but sympathize in the sorrowful accents of the poet and his friends lamenting over the fate of their hero, while they

——“ Sit and hear the promised lay,
The gloomy grotto makes a doubtful day.
The nymphs about the breathless body wait
Of Daphnis, and lament his cruel fate.”

But how much more touching is the following apostrophe of the leader of Israel's choir !

“ Oh my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom !
Would God I had died for thee, oh Absalom, my
son, my son !”

Keeping in mind how far the inspired bards of Israel exceed the poets of Greece and Rome, both in the grandeur of their subject, and in their sublimity of thought and expression, you may refresh yourself now and then among the groves which surround the Æolian mount. It will afford you an instructive view of the various shades of the human character, and enable you to make a more accurate estimate of the merits and tendency of the two systems of religion—Paganism and Christianity. Even in the gods, so often introduced as the principal

actors in these bloody scenes of ancient date, you will see human nature exalted and debased ; for they were nothing more than human beings, invested with such and such attributes by the vivid imagination of the poet, for the purpose of heightening the grandeur and of increasing the solemnity of his poem ; and their frequent interference was announced for the purpose of accounting for the marvellous occurrences, so far transcending the power and sagacity of human beings, which he records.

The intermediate days between the bright morn of ancient science and the more effulgent rays which shine in modern days, you may pass over, as not being sufficient to repay you for the time and labour you must expend to explore them, and muse yourself awhile among the bards of the “ fast anchored Isle.” The immortal *Milton*, whose sublime genius soared to heaven, and recounted the wars of the celestial regions, will fire your soul with devotion, while he illuminates your understanding with important truths. Yes, he will tell you with all

the force of poetical energy, and all the pathos of a firm believer, how

“ The infernal Serpent”——

———“ with ambitious aim”

Against the throne and monarchy of God

Raised impious war in heaven, and battle proud,

With vain attempt.”——

Nor will he neglect to inspire your soul with a love and veneration for the man of invincible fidelity, by the example of

“ Abdiel, faithful found

Among the faithless, faithful only he ;

Among innumerable false, unmoved.”

But your soul will be exalted to the highest pitch of devotion, as well as filled with lowly reverence, at the sight of the *Son of God*, who, after expressing his acquiescence to the will of His Divine Father, rose

“ From the right hand of Glory where he sat,

As the third sacred morn began to shine,

Dawning through heaven”——

And with what eagerness will you view him in pursuit of the “ rebel crew,” mounted upon

“ The chariot of Paternal Deity,

Flashing thick flames, wheel within wheel undrawn,”

while you see the rebellious hosts of heaven
like

“ Goats or timorous flocks together throng’d,”
———“ headlong themselves they throw
Down from the verge of heaven.”

Nor will you be less delighted at beholding
the uncreated SON,

“ Girt with omnipotence, with radiance crown’d
Of majesty divine,”
going forth to create new worlds, nor ceased
until

“ Heaven in all her glory shone, and roll’d
Her motions, as the great first Mover’s hand
First wheel’d their course.”

Milton’s rebel Angels will show you human nature in its worst form ; for his prototypes were, it is presumed, all found among the turbulent spirits of the rough age in which the poet lived.

Young, in his poetical lucubrations, will teach you

“ To revere thyself—and yet thyself despise.”
While he mournfully complains of

“ The inextinguishable thirst in man
To know”—and to enjoy
“ The momentary breeze of vain renown,”

and endeavours to reclaim the infidel from

his delusive dreams of human greatness and happiness, by telling him that

“ The visible and present are for brutes,” and but

“ A slender portion !”

he also sings of God, of Creation, of Redemption, and closes his bold and sublime song with death and immortality. With him, therefore, you mount the skies, and look down upon the

“ Terrestrial citadel of man”

with a mixture of sorrow and delight. After having shown you the emptiness of all earthly grandeur, and the short-livedness of “ earth-born joys,” he leads you to the living fountain ;

“ Redundant bliss ! which fills that empty void
The whole creation leaves in human hearts.”

With what irresistible swiftness does he lift your soul to the throne of the Eternal, and make you long after immortality, when he says,

“ In ardent contemplation’s rapid car
From earth as from a barrier I set out.
How swift I mount !”——

——“ On nature’s Alps I stand,
And see a thousand firmaments beneath !
A thousand systems as a thousand grains !”

How much are we indebted to affliction for some of the finest sentiments, and some of the sublimest pieces of composition ! The exquisite grief of the Poet pressed from him some of the most hallowed strains of his immortal Poem.

In addition to the beauties and elegances of poesy, abounding in the two last mentioned authors, the pure strain of evangelical doctrine running through the whole, makes them an instructive companion for a minister of the Lord Jesus.

Notwithstanding the comparative paucity of truly poetical compositions, yet, when viewed in a cluster, they form no contemptible number, emitting rays of various brightness : while some mount to heaven and soar among the stars, others spread before you as on a canvas, in animated and vivid colours, the variegated beauties of the earth, not forgetting its lordly inhabitant, man.

Thomson may amuse you with

——“ woodlands warbling”——while you
 ——“ trace up the brooks”

and

“ Pursue their rocky channel'd maze
 Down to the river, in whose ample wave
 Their little Nereids love to sport at large.”

And from the opening blossoms of Spring,
he will conduct you forward to behold the
ripening fruits of Summer and Autumn, and
entertain you with a sight of

——“ gathering men their natural powers combined
And form'd a public ; to the general good
Submitting, aiming, and conducting all.”

After soothing all your powers to sweet
tranquillity by his smooth flowing numbers,
and fanning you to rest with the gentle breath
of Autumnal zephyrs, he will awaken you to
prepare for the stern blast of a dreary win-
ter's night, when

——“ the lower'd tempest”

“ The mountain thunders ; and its sturdy sons
Stoop to the bottom of the rocks they shade.
'Lone on the midnight steep, and all aghast,
The dark wayfaring stranger breathless toils,
And, often falling, climbs against the blast.”

With him also you may sit

“ High on the beetling cliff,” and
“ Let the classic page thy fancy lead
Through rural scenes”——

Nor will Thomson fail to inspire you
with a veneration for the great Author of
those seasons which afforded such variety
of matter for his trembling and soaring Muse.

Who can read the following lines without feeling an awful sense of the majesty of the great Supreme ?

“ These, as they change, ALMIGHTY FATHER, these
Are but the varied God. The rolling year
Is full of THEE. Forth in the pleasing Spring
THY beauty walks, THY tenderness and love.”

Cowper unites the beauties of Poetry with the truths of Revelation, and while he teaches

“ Domestic happiness,” as the only bliss

“ Of Paradise, that has survived the fall,”

he does not forget to

——“ Recommend, though at the risk
Of popular disgust, yet boldly still,
The cause of piety, and sacred truth,
And virtue, and those scenes which God ordain’d
Should best secure them.”

And among other interesting subjects upon which he sung, even the preacher of righteousness may find much that is suited to his high and holy office. Yes, he will tell you that

——“ the pulpit

Must stand acknowledged while the world shall stand,
The most important and effectual guard,
Support, and ornament of Virtue’s cause.”

——“ In man or woman, but far most in man,
And most of all in man that ministers
And serves the altar, in my soul I loathe
All affectation.”——

Goldsmith will tell you that

“From labour is health, from health, contentment
springs,

Contentment opes the source of every joy.”

And after toiling for the public good, and exposing yourself to public applause or censure, you can, from a consciousness of the purity and uprightness of your motive and conduct, retire within yourself, and with him exclaim,

“Oh blest retirement ! friend to life’s decline,
Retreats from vice—————

How blest is he who crowns, in shades like these,
A youth of labour with an age of ease.”

Beware of *Pope*. He enchants you with his flowing numbers, while he poisons you with his pernicious sentiments. He sings sweetly upon frothy subjects ; and even in his “*Essay on Man*,” the most admired of all, he confounds good and evil, and, in perfect imitation of his brother heathen, resolves all things into the decrees of immutable fate. His *Dunciad*, a description of the poetical *Dunces* of the age, as the title indicates, and the Poem itself proves it to be, while it evinces the sprightliness of his genius, and his admirable art in pointing the javelin of

irony at folly ; also betrays the vexations of an envious mind, in which rankling jealousy was perpetually disturbing his peace and tranquillity. And that he wrote on subjects which he did not understand, even his biographer, JOHNSON, admits, while he warmly applauds his poetry, and professes to admire his intellectual strength. Nor is it less evident that his principles and moral habits were extremely lax and uneven.

His Homer, however, has immortalized his name among Poets, and laid the mere English Scholar under a large debt of gratitude for having introduced him to this Grecian Bard. But much of the delight which his "Messiah," and his "Vital Spark," and his "Universal Prayer," might afford, is lost by the necessary association of the work with the man. You may, however, cull some flowers from him, if you are careful in your selection. *Beattie, Gray, and Campbell*, will each in his turn afford you some moments of relaxation from severer duties and studies.

We shall pass over other names, to introduce you to those with whom, we trust, you

have already formed some acquaintance. *Watts* you need not despise ; but the *Wesleys* you will hold in the highest estimation ; for, if they may not be ranked among the sublimest of poets, they are certainly among the most pious and spiritual. However, it may be questioned whether, in point of poetical excellence, you will find any thing superior to some of their compositions. You cannot read the piece of which the following is a part, without feeling your soul touched with the poet's fire, and your mind transported beyond the ken of earthly things .—

“ Upborne aloft on venturous wing,
While, spurning earthly themes, I soar,
Through paths untrod before,
What God, what seraph shall I sing ?
Whom but thee should I proclaim
Author of this wondrous frame ?
Eternal, uncreated Lord,
Enshrined in Glory's radiant blaze !
At whose prolific voice, whose potent word,
Commanded, NOTHING swift retired, and WORLDS
began their race.”

“ Lo ! marching o'er the empty space
The fluid stores in order rise
With adamantine chains of liquid glass,
To bind the new-born fabric of the skies.

Downward the Almighty Builder rode,
Old *Chaos* groan'd beneath the God,
Sable clouds his pompous car,
Harnest winds before him ran,
Proud to wear their Maker's chain,
And told with hoarse-resounding voice his coming
from afar."

But to feel the force and to taste the beauties of this hymn, which is poetically grand, you must read the whole of it. Nor is the following less grand and sublime :

"Thou shinest with everlasting rays ;
Before the insufferable blaze
Angels with both wings veil their eyes :
Yet free as air thy bounty streams
On all thy works, thy mercy's beams
Diffusive, as thy sun's, arise.
Astonish'd at thy frowning brow,
Earth, hell, and heaven's strong pillars bow ;
Terrible majesty is thine !
Who then can that vast love express,
Which bows thee down to me, who less
Than nothing am, till thou art mine.
High throned on heaven's eternal hill,
In number, weight, and measure still,
Thou sweetly order'st all that is !
And yet thou deign'st to come to me,
And guide my steps, that I with thee
Enthroned, may reign in endless bliss."

But the peculiar excellence of the Wesleys' poetry consists in the deep vein of piety

which runs through the whole, and the pure stream of evangelical doctrine which flows so uniformly, and with which the mind is continually refreshed.

Perhaps it may be proper to close what we have to say under this head, by observing that, though it may be lawful on some occasions to introduce poetry into sermons, yet a copious use of it is by no means allowable. But this must be done, if done to profit, with a sparing and judicious hand, or the effect designed will be lost.

LETTER XI.

Use of Studying the Languages.

“BUT must I not study the Languages?” If you have studied *language*, and can speak and write your vernacular tongue correctly and grammatically, it will not be labour lost to acquire a knowledge of other languages; and especially of those in which the Holy Scriptures were first written. There is, indeed, an indescribable satisfaction in being able to read and understand the inspired

writings in the language in which “ holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” One advantage resulting from this sort of study is, that it familiarizes the mind to the sacred volume, and communicates a knowledge of divinity at the same time that it introduces us to an acquaintance with the venerable languages of antiquity, and also, if it be accompanied with a historical knowledge of those times, enables us better to understand the point of an allusion to ancient customs and maxims, now obsolete, but with which the Scriptures abound.

We do not, indeed, subscribe to the opinion that we cannot acquire a grammatical knowledge of our own language, without a previous knowledge of the Latin ; because the *grammar* of a language is but a critical analysis of that particular language, the principles of which the grammarian unfolds and displays before his students ; and, therefore, a man may have a critical knowledge of the Latin or any other foreign tongue, and yet not perfectly understand the peculiar idioms of his own : and, indeed,

this is a prevailing fault in many of our English Grammars, that they have been constructed more in conformity to the Latin idioms, than to the peculiarity of their own language. Hence the retention of such technicals as *adjective*, *adverbs*, &c, which really have no meaning to the mere English scholar, until he is told that an *adjective* *qualifies* the noun to which it belongs, and that an *adverb* is added to a verb to *modify* its sense ; and what more does he know about the meaning of a *conjunction*, until he is informed that it serves to *conjoin* or to *connect* two or more words together in the same sentence ? And what does the mere Englishman know about the meaning of a *pronoun*, until he is told it comes from two Latin words, *pro*, *for*, and *nomine*, *name*, and hence by a pronoun we are to understand *for*, *instead of* a *name*, which makes it, properly speaking, a *substitute* for a noun ? It was not intended to have said so much upon this head ; but one thought seemed to suggest another, while thinking upon the absurd notion kept in countenance

by a pedantic and affected veneration for a foreign language, that we cannot acquire a grammatical knowledge of our own tongue independently of another ; whereas the truth is, we have paid such a blind and superstitious reverence to the ancient and dead languages, that we have learned to despise our own, until we think it needful to treat it with contempt, and even neglect its cultivation ; and then to apologize for our ignorance of its beauties and peculiarities by an affected acquaintance with, and popish reverence for, an imported language. And our Lexicographers, instead of tracing our native words up to their roots in the language from whence they are derived, the *Anglo-Saxon*, are perpetually amusing us with forced analogies between our own and those languages with which it is but remotely connected. It is true, that many of our words, particularly terms of art, and those which are peculiarly appropriate to some of the sciences, are derived from the Greek and Latin tongues, or rather are Greek and Latin words anglicized. This has doubtless tended to

enrich our language, and to make it more copious.*

I am not therefore among those who think a knowledge of the ancient languages a superfluous acquisition. On the contrary, I am of opinion that it very much facilitates a critical knowledge of the English, especially in the department of *Etymology*, the know-

* Some time after the above was written, the following remarks from Dr. Adam Clarke appeared in the Wesleyan Methodist Magazine ; and though they are republished in our Magazine, they may not be within the reach of all into whose hands these Letters may fall. I therefore take the liberty of appending them in this note to my little Book.

Cursory Remarks, on the English Tongue, and on the present prevailing mode of Public Education.—By the Rev. ADAM CLARKE, LL. D.

“DEAR SIR,—Dr. John Wallis was savilian professor of geometry in the university of Oxford in 1649. In 1653 he published a *grammar* of the English language in Latin, which, though diffuse, is a work of great merit. It would have been well, if subsequent grammarians of our language, who appear not to have seen it, had really known it and made it their model ; and that some others who have borrowed from it, had run much more into the doctor’s debt, that our obligations to them might have been the greater. He excelled in etymology, for his habits as a *geometer* led him to sift every subject to its bot-

ledge of which conducts us to an acquaintance with the radical meaning of terms, which, indeed, is often essential to a correct understanding of them. You may take an instance of the utility of this sort of knowledge in our word *conscience*, which comes from two Latin words, *con*, *joint* or *together*, and *scientia*, *science* or *knowledge*, and there-

tom, and trace every branch or even *filament* of language to its *radix*. He is the author of the verses under the word *Twister* in Dr. Johnson's dictionary, which the doctor calls *remarkable*, and says, "they explain twist in all its senses." The occasion on which these verses were composed was the following: A very learned Frenchman conversing with Dr. Wallis towards the close of the year 1653, expatiating on the copiousness of his native language, and its richness in derivatives and synonymes, produced, in proof, four verses on *rope-making*, which he appears to have composed for the purpose; they are the following, and though *technically* formed, are admirably *smooth* and *expressive*:

Quand un cordier, cordant, veult corder une corde;
 Pour sa corde corder, trois cordons il accorde:
 Mais, si un des cordons de la corde decorde,
 Le cordon decordant fait decorder la corde.

To show that the English language was at least equally *rich* and *copious*, Dr. Wallis immediately translated the verses into English, word for word, and of equal syllables, taking the word *twist* for the Frenchman's word *corde*.

fore signifies *joint knowledge*, or the knowledge of *two or more things*; which shows that our ancestors, in the formation of their words, *thought* as well as *spoke*. The affinity between the *English, French, and Latin* languages, enables them mutually to explain each other, so that the knowledge of the one leads to an acquaintance with the others,

When a twister, a-twisting, will twist him a twist;
For the twisting of his twist, he three twines doth intwist:
But if one of the twines of the twist do untwist,
The twine that untwisteth, untwisteth the twist.

Here were nouns, verbs, participles, and synonymes, precisely equal to those of the Frenchman, in *number, quantity, and force*; but to show that the riches of his language were not exhausted, he added the four following, which continue the subject:—

Untwirling the twine that untwisted between,
He twirls with his twister the two in a twine;
Then twice having twisted the twines of the twine,
He twitcheth the twine, he had twined, in twain.

The French funds being previously exhausted, no attempt could be made to bring in a parallel. The English *mine*, however, was still rich; and to show that it could be still worked to advantage, Dr. Wallis added the following quatrain:—

The twain that in twining before in the twine,
As twins were intwisted, he now doth untwine;
'Twixt the twain intertwisting a twine more between,
He twirling his twister, makes a twist of the twine.

I question much whether there is a language in the

while the peculiar idiom of each shows them to be derived from different sources. The Greek language will exhibit many words, especially terms of art and of science, the verbal signification of which is lost to the mere English scholar; but which, when traced to their simple terms, we perceive to have an appropriate meaning, having been com-

universe capable of such a variety of flections, or which can afford so many terms and derivatives, all legitimate, coming from one radix, without borrowing a single term from any other tongue, or coining one for the nonce; for there is not a word used above by Dr. Wallis, that is not pure *anglo-Saxon*, not one *exotic* being entertained; for the preposition *inter*, which might have been avoided, does not belong to the radix, and only serves to show it in another state; and as for the preposition *in*, we have not borrowed it from the Latin, as some suppose, as it is a pure *English word*, and is found in many terms of the *anglo-Saxon*.

I have questioned whether any other language could produce a *root* from which such a number of *derivatives* could be formed to explain a *trade* or *manual operation*, in all its parts. I doubt whether the *Arabic*, with all its oppressive fecundity of terms for the same thing, or the *Persian*, with all its privileges of borrowing from the Arabic, and creating participles, &c, *ad libitum*, would not both fail on the trial. I think also that the best *Grecian* in the land would be puzzled to find any sort of legitimate parallel to the English verses; and as for the

pounded and naturalized by men of deep thought and attentive observation. And in no department of study do these have a more important meaning than in *Christian Theology*, the name itself importing a *discourse concerning God*, contradistinguished from all other systems of Theology, by being called after CHRIST, the *anointed One*.

Latin, it will fall miserably short, as the following example will prove: it is a translation which Dr. Wallis himself made, of his own verses, at the request of a foreign nobleman:—

Quum Restiarius aliquis, conficiendis—torquendo funibus-jam
occupatus, vult sibi funem-tortilem contorquendo conficere;
Quo hunc sibi tortilem-funem torquendo conficiat, tria contortu-
apta-filamenta complicanda-invicem-associat

Verum si, ex contortis illis in fune filamentis unum forte se-
explicando complicationi-eximat;

Hoc ita - se - explicando - dissocians filamentum funem - torsione-
factum detorquendo resolvit.

Ille autem, celeriter evolvendo-retexens intermedium illud quod
se-explicando dissociaverat filamentum;

Versorio suo torsionis-instrumento, duo reliqua celeri-volvens-
turbine-contorquet, funiculum-ex-binis-filamentis inde con-
ficiens,

Tum vero quum jam secunda-vice torquendo-convolverat funi-
culi-bi-chordis bina filamenta;

Quem ex-binis-filamentis torquendo-concin-naverat funiculum,
raptim divellendo dirimit.

Tandem, quæ torquendo pridem in funiculo bi-membri filamenta
duo,

As all words in the Hebrew language are derived from verbs of the third person singular, preterite, which of course signify either being, suffering, or acting, it affords no small instruction to ascertain the *ideal* or *radical* meaning of Hebrew words, as we shall thereby be enabled more accurately as well as philosophically to trace the progress

Tanquam gemellos una consociaverat-torquendo, jam detorquendo dissociat:

Et binis illis filamentum adhuc aliud intermedium interserendo consocians,

Versorium ille suum gyro-celeri fortiter-versando, ex funiculo-bimembri plurimembrem torquendo-conficit funem.

The English, of which this is a *literal translation*, amounts in the whole to 109 words, small and great, while the Latin makes 144; and whereas the English has but *one radix*, from which all the *derivatives* come, the Latin is obliged to use upwards of 20 different words, varied as far as they can bear, in order to express this *ONE root*, and its *branches*! Dr. Wallis gives an analysis of the English verses, in which he considers *two* as the primitive or radical word, and the others all *derivatives* from this one radix.

Why is not such a language as this better studied? Why is it not studied *analytically*? It is by its analysis that we can discover its *force* and *truth*. It is the language of every *art* and of every *science*, for there is none other in which they can be so *well* and so *intelligibly* described. Whatever has been effected by the greatest *Grecian* or *Roman* orator, can be effected by the *English*-

of language, and to perceive the mutual relation and dependance one word has with and upon another. But this is not the only advantage to be derived from a knowledge of this ancient, and, as some think, primitive language.

In the names of persons, places, and things, all of which are now classed among

man who fully understands his mother tongue ; and perhaps, above all the languages of all the babbling nations of the earth, the English is that in which the sublime *science of salvation* can be best explained and illustrated, and the things of God most forcibly and effectually recommended !

When I had almost finished the preceding remarks, there fell into my hand the speech delivered by that very enlightened nobleman, the earl of Moira, late governor-general of India, before the members of the college of Calcutta, some time in 1814, which bears so strongly on the subject of the excellency of the English language, that I feel no ordinary pleasure in being able to enrich this paper with a short extract from it. After apologizing for bringing before the learned members of that institution, (on the day professedly devoted to applaud and stimulate proficiency in the *Asiatic languages*,) any thing relative to the *English tongue*, he proceeds in the following strain of just and eloquent description :—

“ Regard it (the English language) not, I beseech you, as the mere medium of ordinary intercourse. It is a *mine*, whence you may extract the means of enchanting,

nouns, but were primarily either derived from verbs, or were merely adjectives or adverbs, we shall be able to perceive the reason why the name was so appropriated, because the name itself was suggested by some circumstance connected with the place, some quality of the thing, or some action of the creature, or by some peculiar

instructing, and improving communities yet nameless, and generations yet unborn. Our English language has never had adequate tribute paid to it.

“ Among the languages of modern Europe, specious, but subordinate pretensions have been advanced to *cadence*, *terseness*, or *dextrous ambiguity* of insinuation ; while the sober majesty of the English tongue stood aloof, and disdained a competition on the ground of such inferior particularities. I even think that we have erred with regard to *Greek* and *Latin*. Our sense of the inestimable benefit we have reaped from the treasures of taste and science, which they have handed down to us, has led us into an *extravagance of reverence* for them. They have high intrinsic merit, without doubt, but it is a *bigoted gratitude*, and an *unweighed admiration*, which induce us to prostrate the character of the *English tongue* before their altar. Every language can furnish to genius, casually, a forcible expression ; and a thousand turns of neatness and delicacy may be found in most of them : but I will confidently assert, that, in that which should be the first object in all language, *precision*, the English tongue surpasses them all : while in *richness of colour-*

circumstance attending the birth of the person. Of the truth of this, the mere English reader may be convinced by consulting his Bible, and observing the marginal references. Now, although we may repose confidence, generally, in the knowledge and integrity of our translators of the Bible, yet it is no small satisfaction to be able to fol-

ing, and extent of power, it is exceeded by none, if equalled by any. What subject is there within the boundless range of imagination which some British author has not clothed in British phrase, with a nicety of definition, an accuracy of portraiture, a brilliancy of tint, a delicacy of discrimination, and a force of expression, which must be sterling, because every other nation of Europe, as well as our own, admits their perfection with enthusiasm !

“ Are the fibres of the heart to be made to tremble with anxiety,—to glow with animation,—to thrill with horror,—to startle with amaze,—to shrink with awe,—to throb with pity, or to vibrate in sympathy with the tone of pictured love ; know ye not the mighty *magicians* of our country, whose potent *spell* has commanded, and continues irresistibly to command, these varied *impulses* ? Was it a puny engine, a feeble art, that achieved such wondrous workings ? What was the sorcery ? *Justly conceived collocation of words*, is the whole secret of this witchery ; a charm within the reach of any of you. Possess yourselves of the necessary *energies*, and be assured you will find the language *exuberant* beyond the demand of your intensest thought. How many po-

low the streams to their fountains, or of tracing words to their respective roots, and of observing how the branches of these verbal trees were anciently formed.

But after all that may be said upon this subject, the leading principles of grammar are the same in all languages, only they differ in the details according to the pecu-

sitions are there which form the basis of every day's reflection ; the matter for the ordinary operation of our minds, which were toiled after perhaps for ages, before they were seized and rendered comprehensible ! How many subjects are there which *we ourselves* have grasped at, as if we saw them floating in an atmosphere just above us, and found the *arm of our intellect* but just too short to reach them : and then comes a happier genius, who, in a fortunate moment, and from some vantage ground, arrests the *meteor* in its flight ; and grasps the floating phantom ; drags it from the skies to the earth ; condenses that which was but an impalpable corruscation of spirit ; fetters that which was but the lightning glance of thought ; and having so mastered it, bestows it as a perpetual possession and heritage on mankind !"

What a pity, that with a language, and such treasures in it, the best part of the lives of so many of our *youth* should be *spent*, if not *wasted*, in studies and in languages, that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, serve only to pass through the *forms of schools and colleges*, and however they may have acquitted themselves in Greek and Latin, Mathematics, and a still inefficient

liarity of idiom which predominates in each. And it should not be forgotten, though it may be somewhat humbling to the learned philologist, that language existed, both verbal and written, long before any grammar was either studied or taught: hence it follows that grammatical treatises are but artificial arrangements of the materials furnished

Aristotelian philosophy, enter upon life with scarcely a requisite for passing honourably and usefully through it; many of them not being able properly to *read*, scarcely at all to *analyze*, and hardly to *spell* their *mother tongue*! I have seen private letters of the most learned man of the seventeenth century, who, besides Greek and Latin, of which he was a master, possessed such a knowledge of the *seven Asiatic languages* as perhaps no man then in Europe did, and wrote upon and explained them with profound accuracy, and yet was so *ignorant* of his own native *English tongue*, that he could neither *construct* nor *spell* a single sentence with propriety! How many of the *rising generation* are returning daily from *very expensive seminaries* of learning, who are sadly deficient in a proper knowledge of language, who cannot *parse* a single sentence correctly, so as to show the *force* of the words, the *concord* and *government*, and the proper or improper *collocation* of the terms!

“ Let every foreign tongue alone,
Till you can *read* and *spell* your own,”

is a sound piece of advice, comes from high authority, and should be treated with great respect.

by nature, variously combined and expressed by the organs of speech, in order to communicate thought for thought: and hence also, after all the nice and methodical arrangements of the skilful linguist, who dissects the language into its elementary principles, the many exceptions to his general rules, nature thereby evincing its determi-

I do not *speak against learning*,—nor even *think* against it, nor against *proper seminaries* for learning, whether they rank as *schools* or *colleges*: but I speak against useless and deficient education. I speak against the preposterous plan of teaching our *English* youth, any thing or every thing but their *mother tongue*.

Parents would do well to inquire most pointedly into the character and qualifications of the boarding schools to which they send their *daughters*; and the academies and colleges to which they send their *sons*. Let them never sacrifice their *sterling coin* for the *tinsel* lackering and gilding of learning. Let them give all diligence that their children may be taught what will make them *useful to themselves, profitable to others, and respectable in society*. As to *boarding schools*, I may beg humbly to look into them at some future time.—I say nothing to the necessity of attending to the advice of the *wise man*, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” This, I believe, was never better understood than in the present age, and at no time more practically applied, and hence there is at this time a greater proportion of moral and pious youths

nation to resist the innovations of the artist, and its stubbornness to yield its prior demands to the taste and rules of human art and contrivance. The pruning knife of the judicious critic may lop off some of the wild luxuriances of nature, and his mandate may restrain the avidity of ingrafting redundancies from a foreign stalk ; but he cannot make the unbending laws of nature so pliable as to suit all his artificial rules, no more than he can entirely curb the whims and fancies of those who vainly imagine that they can improve the beauty of their own language

than was ever before in this country, or is now in any other country in the world. To God be praise for ever ! this is a proper initiatory education, but it is not that concerning which I now write,—I plead for the necessity of a good *English* education, and for making Latin and Greek subservient to it when they are studied. Let our British youth be taught the language of life,—the language of those with whom they are to transact the business of life,—the language that is rich and powerful beyond all languages of the universe :—in a word, let them be thoroughly taught the language of Britain.

I am, dear sir, yours truly,

ADAM CLARKE.

Eastcott, Jan. 1, 1825."

by the perpetual introduction of foreign terms.

Do you inquire for books? In mentioning these I shall keep in mind for whose benefit I am writing; and therefore shall recommend only those which are fittest for such persons. PARKHURST'S *Hebrew and Greek Lexicons*, HEDERICUS' *Lexicon*, PIKE'S and FREY'S *Grammars and Lexicons*, EWING'S and DAWSON'S *Greek Lexicons*, MIDDLETON on the *Greek Article*, a *Hebrew Bible*, the *Septuagint*, or *Greek translation of the OLD TESTAMENT*, GRIESBACH'S or LEUSDEN'S *Greek NEW TESTAMENT*, will be sufficient for your purpose, unless you wish to study the Greek and Latin classics; but if you have not already, in the course of your youthful studies, obtained some knowledge of the Latin and Greek languages, it will be hardly worth your expense of time and labour, unless you have youth on your side, to undertake at this time, in your present employment, to plod through them. Of the propriety of this, however, you must be your own judge.

It ought, nevertheless, to be recollected

that the same necessity does not now exist for a knowledge of the learned languages, as did formerly, when almost all the learned professions were taught through the medium of either the Greek, Latin, or French language. The case is now widely different. Not only the Scriptures, but most of the ancient authors, are rendered into English, and also all the arts and sciences, which were so long hidden in a dead language, are now taught in the language of our own country. And, indeed, a man that understands his native tongue, may acquire through that medium alone, a knowledge of every branch of science which is necessary for him to know ; and a man may be pronounced truly learned, without going beyond the precincts of his own native language. Yes, more knowledge is spread before the mere English scholar, than any one man can master, were he to devote his whole life to retirement and study ; and the field is continually enlarging by the labours of scientific men.

But in the study of language, whether of our own or of another, we should remem-

ber, that its only use is to be an organ of communication from one person to another ; and hence its utility is to be estimated in proportion to its subserviency to this ulterior object ; and, therefore, just so far as the knowledge of languages becomes an auxiliary to the minister in explaining and enforcing the truths of the gospel, so far it should be sought after. With this object in view, which alone will sanctify the pursuit, you may labour, especially to read the Old Testament in the Hebrew, and both the Old and New in Greek. The study of these languages, particularly with the aid of Parkhurst's Lexicons, will enrich your mind with divine truth, and open to your soul a field of intellectual pleasure and delight, which will amply repay you for the many hours of tedious application which it may cost you.

I cannot conclude without one caution. It is this : whatever knowledge you may obtain of this sort, you must remember that you are not called to preach either in Latin, Greek, or Hebrew ; and therefore the introduction of these words, with a view to criticise upon the translation, should be as

sparing as possible. In addition to the disgusting spectacle of a pedantic preacher instructing mankind in the lessons of Christian humility, it tends rather to weaken the confidence of the major part of your hearers in the faithfulness and integrity of those words of the Holy Scripture which long use has made familiar to their minds. Though it may be granted that in many places the translation might be mended by substituting a modern term for one that has become obsolete, and in some cases by changing the tense and mood of the verb, or by altering the translation of a particle ; yet this changing should be resorted to only in cases of absolute necessity, when the truth cannot be otherwise rescued from the hands of its adversary ; and even in that case, it is generally better, when before a congregation, to conceive and clothe the idea in an easy and popular paraphrase, than to deaden an audience who know not what you say, by a rehearsal of an unknown language, and by a criticism which may raise a suspicion of vanity, instead of inspiring a confidence in your wisdom and integrity.

And a *Thus saith the Lord*, has more weight on an English audience than a thousand words of the same import in Hebrew, Greek, or Latin, which none of them understand. וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים may be understood by a Hebraist, and Ἡ ἀλήθεια αὐτοῦ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, might suit a Grecian ear, while *In qua mensura mensi fueritis, remetietur vobis*, might make an agreeable sound in the ear of a Latin scholar, and a Frenchman would understand *Ne jugez point, afin que vous ne soyez point jugés*; but how much more pleasant and edifying would it be to an English audience to express the same things. *Oratio vulgo accommodata*, in a popular discourse, in the following manner:—*And then said God—Jesus touched him—For whatsoever measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again!—Judge not, that ye be not judged.*

It is very possible to astonish the ignorant with an affected appearance of learning, while we disgust the learned by the ignorance and vanity which we exhibit in striving to appear what we are not. Sound learning, combined with deep experience, will ever be productive of that diffidence and

humility, which altogether constitute true dignity of character, and which will command that respect and attention which are due to an ambassador of Jesus Christ.

LETTER XII.

Verbal Criticism.

IN the former Letter were made some observations on the expediency and usefulness of acquiring a knowledge of the learned languages. On that subject, the writer has freely given his own views, without any reference to the practicability of entering into such a close study as shall give to the student an ascendancy in the scale of literature. To this pre-eminence few only can hope to attain. To be a “master workman” is not essential to every labourer.

To what has been there said, I would add a few remarks upon VERBAL CRITICISM; by which is understood a critical knowledge of words, the radical meaning of which determines, very often, the primary sense of the passage with which they stand

connected ; and especially such words as are emphatical in that particular connexion. I would premise, however, that although it may be important, in rescuing an obscure or controverted passage from objectionable interpretation, to be competent to ascertain the radical meaning of words, by tracing them to their respective roots, yet it is thought that too much dependance has frequently been placed upon this sort of criticism, in settling theological questions. There are certain veins of truth running through the field of Christian Theology, to which the needle of revelation directs the mind of the conscientious theologian, and to which, by carefully digging, he will infallibly arrive. These are discovered, not merely by a solitary glimmering of light of uncertain origin ; but by the collected rays of Truth, which beam forth through the medium of revelation. There are, indeed, in this divine Book, a *leading design*, a *prevailing truth*, a *predominant doctrine*, and a *paramount duty*, which show themselves throughout the whole volume, and which forcibly strike the reader's attention in almost every page. This

being the case, we do not depend upon a word of dubious import, nor upon any insulated passage, for the establishment of any particular doctrine, or for the authority of any particular duty ; but this is to be ascertained from a careful collation of the several parts of the inspired writings, and by the harmonious testimony of the whole. These remarks are intended to guard you against attaching too much importance to sentiments derived merely from the etymological meaning of words, and from indulging too freely in verbal criticism for the establishment of a favourite doctrine.

But while we should scrupulously guard ourselves against the *abuse* of this sort of knowledge, I would recommend its *use* to all those who are capable of turning it to the advantage of truth and righteousness. Since there are those who press this kind of learning into the service of heterodoxy, and make it subserve the promulgation of error, it is well to be able to wrest the javelin from their hands, and then to vanquish them with those very weapons with which they thought to have assailed and conquered you. While

they speak “great swelling words of vanity,” and boast of their dexterity in wielding the original words of Scripture to support their cause, meet them with meekness and wisdom, and evince the superiority of truth, by the *manner* in which you are able to “take the spoil from the mighty.”

The Unitarians or Socinians, as well as the Universalists, are perpetually resorting to their quibbling criticisms upon the import of particular phrases, and especially the original words of Scripture, in order to support the peculiarities of their respective systems. Why is this? Is it because they gain any thing by such conduct? No, surely. But they hope thereby to dazzle the minds of the ignorant by a pompous parade of learning, and to impose upon the credulous by an ostentatious show of industry in searching into the writings of the ancients. Now, to undeceive the deceived, and to establish the wavering in the truth, follow such fantastic quibblers into their lurking places, strip them of their armour, and bind them with the cords of truth, that they may no longer ensnare the unsuspecting with the splendid trappings of a false learning.

How often have we been told that *Αἰών*, (*aion*,) does not signify *eternity*, but only a definite term of time, and that it ought to be rendered *ages*? But let any man open his Bible with a candid desire to ascertain the truth, and collate the several places where this and its correlative terms are found, and he will soon be convinced of the frivolity of all such criticisms. And equally weak is the argument founded upon the *ideal* meaning of *ὥλεν* (*olem*,) which literally signifies to *hide* or to *conceal in the dark*; for all who will impartially consult the several places where it occurs, will perceive that it is most appropriately used to represent, as far as human language can represent, *eternity*, which, indeed, is *hidden* or *concealed* from mortal sight. If you wish to see how completely nugatory the Socinian argument is, which professes to derive strength from a critical examination of those passages in the original Scriptures, which speak of the personality of Christ, you may consult *Wardlow on the Socinian Controversy*, and *Middleton on the force of the Greek Article*.

In the application of this sort of criticism

for the illustration of Scripture, or the vindication of any special doctrine, it should be recollected that many terms, particularly in the Greek of the New Testament, are used in a sense quite different from what they were by the heathen Greeks. Is it to be supposed, for instance, that the words, ΠΙΣΙΣ, ΘΕΟΣ, ΑΓΙΟΣ, ΟΥΡΑΝΟΣ, ΑΔΗΣ or ΓΕΕΝΝΑ, conveyed the same ideas to a heathen Greek, as they did to a Christian? Was the *Faith* of a Grecian moralist, in *God*, in *holiness*, in *heaven*, in *hell*, the same as the *Faith* either of a Christian or a Jew? While the former apprehended by his faith a plurality of deities, or, as the apostle expresses it, “Gods many and Lords many,” to the faith of the latter there was “but one God.” While his *heaven* was filled with angry deities who once had their abodes on earth, the heaven of the holy Christian becomes refulgent with the smiles of the *God of love*, and its society enlivened with those who had “washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” The inspired apostles took up words as they found them in the current language in which they spoke

and wrote ; but as they taught a system of doctrines and duties which was entirely new to the generality of their hearers, they used such like terms as we have enumerated, in a sense far more noble and sublime, than what the heathen philosophers did. And though they were sanctioned by the authority of the Septuagint or Greek translation of the Old Testament, in applying most of the terms in the manner they did, yet in treating on the doctrine of the incarnation of Christ, His vicarious sacrifice, of the efficacy of his blood, and the glorious fruits of His resurrection and ascension, and intercession, they were under the necessity of either inventing new terms, or of employing old ones in a new sense. The latter method was generally adopted. By this means the meaning of emphatical words was transferred to the explanation and support of a new system of Theology, far surpassing in the grandeur of its object, in the depth of its counsels, the sublimity of its truths, and in the obligation of its precepts and duties, any system of religion the world ever saw. This observation should be kept in mind, espe-

cially when explaining and applying those words which have been incautiously selected from the inspired writings to defend the doctrine of *necessity*, or of *fate*.

One more thought upon this subject. As words are used by the inspired, as well as by all other writers, in a variety of senses, we can ascertain the sense in which they should be understood only by tracing them to their ideal meaning, and then by carefully collating the several passages in which they occur. Having arrived at their primitive meaning by descending to their respective roots or verbal signification, we may then follow them through their various inflections, and note the variety of senses in which they are used. This will enable us to determine with tolerable accuracy, the idea which ought to be attached to such words in any particular connexion. And it ought to be remembered that, very often, the meaning of an emphatical word in a sentence can only be determined by the circumstance of its being there used, or from the general scope and design of the writer in committing his thoughts to writing. This last con-

sideration will induce a cautious modesty in our appeals to the *ideal* or *radical* meaning of terms in order to determine the truth of any leading doctrine of Christianity ; as the more we canvass this subject, the more we shall be convinced that this may be done more effectually from the analogy of faith, and from the general declarations of Scripture, than merely from philological criticism.

The observations made upon this subject are not limited in their application to the knowledge of any one particular language. But as the Holy Scriptures were originally written in the Hebrew and Greek, such a knowledge of these two languages, as will enable you to trace important and emphatical Scripture phrases back to their simple terms, and the simple ideas for which they stand, is of great use in the study of theology ; and it is also admitted that from whatever source the words in common use may be derived, an ability to ascertain their etymological sense, is an acquisition of useful knowledge. Our own language being derived from a variety of sources, and continually accumulating by the introduction

and naturalization of foreign words, it requires a vast compass of grammatical knowledge to understand its etymology. To this height of literary eminence few only can hope to attain. But all those who profess to be sent of God to instruct mankind in the most interesting and sublime of all sciences, should endeavour to furnish themselves with as much of this sort of information, as will enable them to defend the truth against the assaults of cunning and designing adversaries. If it be made subservient to the main end of their mission, the salvation of souls, it will be sanctified unto them, and be made a useful auxiliary in defending the truth.

To comprehend adequately the force and radical meaning of words, Concordances and Dictionaries should be consulted in all doubtful cases. Those who have not arrived at such a critical knowledge of the learned languages, as to be competent to trace words in common use up to their original source, provided they can read them, may be greatly assisted by a reference to those Lexicons which give their explanations in the English

tongue. In this respect, since Englishmen have duly appreciated their own language, we are greatly indebted to the learned and scientific labours of some modern writers, such as Parkhurst, M'Knight, Ewin, Moore, Frey, and Middleton ; the first of whom, in his Hebrew and Greek Lexicons, throws a flood of light on many obscure passages of sacred Scripture, by his verbal criticisms and theological researches ; for his valuable Lexicons, in many respects, assume more the character of commentaries than of mere definers of words ; and M'Knight, in his Essays on the force and peculiarity of certain Scriptural phrases, has rendered an essential service to biblical criticism ; while Middleton, by his critical remarks on the use and meaning of the Greek Article, has contributed much towards settling the long agitated question concerning the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. The others are chiefly valuable (and they are not to be considered the less valuable on that account) for their philological criticisms, or as explainers of the radical meaning of the Hebrew and Greek words.

If, however, you would excel in this branch of knowledge, your attention must not be confined to Lexicons of the learned languages. English Dictionaries must be assiduously consulted ; and though a complete etymological Dictionary, such as should present a synopsis of the various sources from whence our language is derived, particularly the Anglo-Saxon, French, and Latin, is still a desideratum in the philological world, we may generally obtain satisfactory help on this point from *Johnson's large Dictionary* ; and perhaps equally as much, at less expense, from *Bailey's valuable Dictionary*. *Brown's Pronouncing Dictionary* will combine directions for pronunciation according to Walker's key, with a classical definition, as established by Johnson. And his *Classical Dictionary* will explain those terms found in ancient geography, history, and heathen mythology, with which many authors abound. In all practicable cases, follow every word up to its root, and attentively mark its ideal and verbal signification. This is of much greater use than we may at first imagine, as it will qualify us to examine

with greater accuracy the precise idea which ought to be attached to every word, and especially to important and emphatical ones. To guard against an improper use of words, the exact sense in which they are used by the best writers and speakers should be ascertained ; for we are exceedingly apt to slide imperceptibly into the use of words, from hearing them frequently spoken by loose and thoughtless speakers, without considering their import, or the suitableness of their application in that particular connexion.

But in the study of theology, a Concordance to the Holy Scriptures, *Cruden's*, *Butterworth's*, or *Taylor's*, should be consulted, in connexion with an approved Critical Commentary ; not merely with a view to ascertain the meaning of words, or to settle theological questions ; but also to learn the great variety of senses in which the same word is used, as well as to perceive the accuracy with which the several writers of the sacred volume support the same great and cardinal truths of divine revelation. Hence the vast utility of noticing parallel passages, that you

may perceive how they mutually explain and support each other

While it is acknowledged to be vastly important perfectly to comprehend the meaning of words, it is not to be supposed that pronunciation is to be neglected as a thing entirely useless. Though an observation like this may seem to belong more properly to a treatise on eloquence, yet it may not be amiss to observe here, that the rapid manner of speaking which seems to have grown into so general a use, is rather to be deprecated than imitated. The running two or more words into one in sound, almost entirely dropping conjunctions, prepositions, and articles, neglecting to sound the vowels, either for the sake of brevity, or from not attending to their use ; the clipping words at their termination, which the established rules of pronunciation require to be sounded, or dropping a syllable in the middle of a word, which is often done ; are defects which ought to be carefully avoided by every public speaker. Equally defective, and much more irksome, is that drawling manner of speaking, by which almost every

syllable is accented, and every word in a sentence is equally emphatical; in which disgusting practice there is neither accent, cadence, nor emphasis, but a dull monotony of sounds, offensive and tiresome to the hearers. If any practice is more reprehensible still, it is that which some contract in laying an emphasis in a sort of regular routine, without any attention to the nature of the subject, or the import of the words they utter. These two extremes may be easily avoided with a little care and attention to pronunciation, and to the rules of good speaking.

LETTER XIII.

The Church—its government—doctrines—duties and powers of the Ministry—rights of its Members—its ordinances, &c.

AMONG all the other studies to which your attention may be directed, the Articles of Faith, the government, ordinances, rites, and ceremonies of the Church, will claim your most assiduous attention. And that

you may be thoroughly furnished on these momentous subjects, you should examine and compare those of the different religious communities, marking their agreement or disagreement, and noting what is peculiar to each.

In reading ecclesiastical history, you doubtless have been attentive to those matters, and have been conducted to the conclusion, that while all agree that the Church consists of two main branches, the ministry and the membership, there is a diversity of opinions as to what constitutes the membership of the Church, and as to what belongs to a true gospel ministry.

As to membership, where religion has obtained a legal and national establishment, it is supposed that all are born members of the visible Church, which they are bound by law to support. Others think, with much better reason, that baptism is the initiating rite into the Church, while others contend that no one has a right to its privileges but such as have an experience, and make a public profession, of divine grace. Now, among these conflicting opinions, a careful exami-

nation of their respective claims to Scripture authority and precedent, is essential to enable you to be always ready to give, at least to yourself, a satisfactory reason for your adherence to one opinion and practice rather than to another. To do this understandingly, you must study the economy of the Church, as it has existed under the different dispensations, the Patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the Christian, as well as the various sentiments and discordant opinions, with the arguments for and against each, prevalent among the several sects of Christians, Catholics and Protestants. And although the theory you may embrace may not be so perfectly clear in all points as to amount to perfect and undoubting conviction, yet you may, after balancing the respective claims of each, find sufficient reason for giving to one the preference to all others.

As to the ministry, while all agree that an order of men to be devoted to the service of the sanctuary, is essential to the existence of a Christian Church, there is a diversity of opinion respecting the call, qualification,

orders, powers, duties, and manner of support of the Christian ministry. Some contend that a designation to the ministry is indicated only by an outward call ; others, with much more Scripture authority on their side, think that an inward call to this work by the Holy Spirit, must precede and accompany the sanction and appointment of men : some think a classical education, and regular course of theological studies, may not be dispensed with ; while some consider scientific attainments as of no use ; but others, justly taking a middle ground, are willing to pay due respect to learning and science, while they insist on spiritual qualifications as constituting the more essential prerequisites of a gospel ministry, and who wish to combine the excellences of both, whenever it is practicable. Some believe that there is but one order in the ministry ; some two, and others three, and that these three may be subdivided into a number of offices, all under the control of one general head. On this subject a minister of Christ should be able to balance the arguments for and against each, and to assign

the reasons why he adheres to one in preference to any other. And this he may do without excluding from the communion of saints those from whom he dissents, because he has learnt to distinguish between that which is essential to a gospel ministry, and that which may be merely prudential, knowing also that God has left many of these matters to the wisdom and discretion of the Church.

There is yet another point in relation to the powers of the ministry, which ought not to be wholly overlooked ; and that is, whether the Lord Jesus hath delegated to his ministers the sole right of governing the Church, or whether the people generally, or by a fair representation from their own body, should be associated with the ministry, in enacting laws and regulations for its government. Do not be afraid of meeting any of these questions, and wherever the truth plainly points out the way, there fearlessly walk.

Another particular relating to the ministry is—and this involves another point of Church government—whether the ministry should

be wholly local, or wholly travelling, or whether it may partake of both ; whether it should be exclusively devoted to the “ word and doctrine,” and derive its entire support from the people ; or whether it may, at the same time, follow a secular calling for a livelihood ; and also whether ministers are to be settled over individual congregations by the choice of the people, or whether they should be entirely subject to the appointment of a superior minister. Where you cannot be guided in these inquiries by an express warrant from Scripture, nor any known usage of the primitive Church, you must determine the point—unless the practice be expressly condemned by the laws of Christ, in which case a defence of it would be both absurd and impious—from its supposed fitness or unfitness to times and circumstances, its expediency or probable utility ; always remembering that every minutia relating to the usages or government of the Church, is not to be found in the Holy Scriptures.

In respect to the different forms of Church government, though each Church may have

something peculiar in its organization, by which it is distinguished from others of the same denomination, yet there are but three substantially, viz. the CONGREGATIONAL, the PRESBYTERIAN, and the EPISCOPALIAN. These differ very considerably from each other; and therefore you ought to make yourself acquainted with them all, marking their points of contrast and analogy, and the rules by which they are governed, as well as the principal arguments by which they are supported and defended. *Buck's Theological Dictionary* will help you to some useful hints on this subject.

It is not only to the *government* of the several denominations you are to look, but also to their *doctrines*. On a careful examination of this subject, you will find that among Heathens, Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans, there are some cardinal truths in which they all agree, while in other respects they widely differ from each other. The Christians have arrayed themselves in two grand divisions, the *Calvinists* and *Arminians*, who, while they unite to support the great and leading principles of Chris-

tianity, differ widely in respect to other points. The next division is the *Trinitarians* and *Socinians*, and the next the *Universalists*, and *those who believe in the eternity of hell's torments*; and each of these may be subdivided by some slight shades of difference among themselves. For a knowledge of all these matters you must consult their several Articles of Faith, and the arguments for and against them.

On this subject you must scrupulously guard against one evil, and that is, the forming a judgment of any sect from the statements of its adversaries. Every man is entitled to a fair hearing in his own defence, and ought to have the liberty of confronting and sifting, in the presence of his judge, the testimony which may be advanced against him. And it is a lamentable fact, that there are but few controversial writers but what have, in their representations of their antagonists, disfigured them with more or less of false colouring. Who, for instance, that would judge of the Roman Catholics from such representations as are contained in the "*Master Key to Popery*," but what must

believe them nearly all the most abandoned set of hypocrites that ever lived to disgrace human nature? And were we to form our opinion of *Luther*, *Calvin*, and others of the Protestant Reformers, from the distorted statements of their Catholic adversaries, we should think them among the worst of men. Let *John Wesley* appear in the habiliments put upon him by *Nightingale*, *Hampson*, or *Southey*, and you would flee from him as a monster in human shape, made up of a mixture of good and bad qualities, alternately triumphing over a mind vastly expanded by science, and superstitiously bent on promoting religious truth! Let these facts induce you to hear all you can for and against any sect, and then make up your mind according to truth and righteousness.

Another branch belonging to this department of study is, respecting the ordinances and ceremonies of the Church, what and how many they are; their use, and the manner in which they should be administered. Although among Protestants you will find a general agreement as to the number and validity of Christian ordinances, yet

you will find some diversity of opinion as it regards the manner in which they should be administered. In deciding on these points, about which there has been no little controversy, you will do well to recollect that the validity of Christian ordinances cannot depend on the *mode* of their being administered, so much as it does on the authority and qualifications of the administrator, and the fitness of the subjects of them. There is also some diversity of opinion concerning the efficacy of the ordinances, as well as who are the suitable subjects of them. Some contend that neither baptism nor the Lord's supper is to be administered to any but adult believers; while others think that all who profess the Christian name are entitled to the one, and that all children of believing parents are suitable subjects of the other. On these and similar points, after consulting the Holy Scriptures, with the best lights you can obtain, you must make up your judgment with as much candour and impartiality as you can, so as to be able to justify your own practice as an administrator of the ordinances of Christ. Look at

Dr. Adam Clarke on the *Eucharist*, and *Mr. Wesley's Sermon* on the duty of *constant communion*. *Edwards* on *Baptism* is good so far as argument is concerned ; but I fear he indulged in too much contempt for his antagonists.

In addition to the Holy Scriptures and the writers just mentioned, for information on these subjects, you must consult the Articles of Faith acknowledged and adopted by the several sects, as well as their formularies of religion, marking those peculiarities by which each is distinguished. *Hurd's History of all Religions*, (though I fear not in all respects an impartial one,) one large folio volume, will furnish a comprehensive view of all that belongs to the several religious communities, whether Heathen, Jew, Christian, or Mohammedan. But if this be not within your reach, a more compendious view may be had from a smaller work lately published by the *Rev. Mr. Benedict*, who seems to have given an impartial, though short, account of all the religious sects throughout the world.

The duty is so obvious, that it seems

hardly necessary to mention it, that you must attentively study every part of the economy of your own Church, marking its origin, rise, and progress, the duties peculiar to the several orders of its ministers, the duties and privileges of its members, with that form of Discipline which regulates the whole, and binds it together in one compact body, "by that which every joint supplieth." See the writers mentioned under this head in Letter III, page 26. And I add here, by the advice of the Book Committee, my own work on Methodist Episcopacy.

LETTER XIV.

Some General Remarks in regard to the manner in which Books should be consulted.

THAT it is possible to read many books, without being much the wiser or better, will not be disputed by those who have attentively considered this subject. Some men have been known who could boast of the number of books they had read, but who

could give little or no account of their contents, who had collected no important truths from them, and whose minds were so empty of sound knowledge, that, instead of expressing themselves intelligibly on subjects which required thought and investigation, they delighted more in regaling themselves with vain and frothy conversation, light and idle vanities, than dwelling on those great doctrines of truth with which the Scriptures abound. This reprehensible defect is not so much owing to an incapacity to understand and profit from what might be read, as it is to an aversion to close and accurate research, and to a careless and loose manner of reading. The soil may be good, but it needs culture to make it productive. To remedy this defect—

1. Make a judicious selection of the authors you design to read. As observed in a former Letter, it is a waste of time to read any and every thing which comes to hand. Dismiss from your catalogue all writers of doubtful authority, all low, mean, and grovelling publications, such as are only calculated to fill the mind with light and airy

notions, and let your mind rather dwell on those subjects which are calculated to enlighten and strengthen the understanding, and to improve the heart.

These remarks are not intended to restrict you from a copious collection of books of general reading, whether on theology, history, philology, or philosophy, nor even to prevent a perusal of those works which are opposed to your own particular views; but it is designed to prevent a rambling excursion from one to the other, without any determinate end in view, but merely to fill up a vacant hour. There is a difference between studying an author for the sake of obtaining a more thorough knowledge of any particular subject connected with theology, and reading the news of the day, &c. When the mind is matured with sound wisdom, we may then take a wider range into the field of literature, and more indiscriminately look into the various publications with which the world abounds. Neither do I think that a minister ought to be ignorant of the events of daily occurrence, and especially those of great national importance.

This indeed is often necessary to enable him to have a comprehensive view of the dispensations of God's providence, so as to mark the operations of His hand, and to infer from a collected view of the whole, his immediate duty. Hence a public Journal, in which these things are recorded with impartiality, is a desirable auxiliary in bringing useful information. More particularly should he be acquainted with all the great operations of the Christian world, whether he approve of them all or not, now directed to the melioration and salvation of mankind. Nothing is more disgusting than a vacant stare of ignorance in the countenance of a minister of Christ, in relation to these subjects, whenever they are the topic of conversation.

2. Having therefore fixed on those books which are best calculated to impart instruction, examine them thoroughly. It is said of Mr. Baxter, that his books were full of marginal notes of translations from the dead languages ; and doubtful or erroneous sentiments, as well as those containing interesting and important matter, were marked accordingly.

3. Have a blank or memorandum book at hand, in which you may record thoughts that may be suggested either from reading or conversation, or from your own private meditations ; and likewise in which you may epitomise those subjects which are the most useful and important, clothing the sentiments of others in your own language, and then making such deductions from the whole as may occur to your mind. This method, though slow, will abundantly compensate you for all your time and labour, and will tend to banish from your mind those stale and uninteresting thoughts which become stagnant for want of action.

4. In reading history, collate the several authors you may consult, and endeavour to memorize all the great and important events they record, marking their chronology, and their parallelism with each other, and particularly those recorded in sacred Scripture ; for I would not have you forget, that in all your studies you are a minister of Christ, and therefore whatever knowledge you may attain, it is to be made subservient to the illustration and enforcement of divine truth.

In your memorandum book notice all the great personages of whom you read, the time of their birth, what brought them into public notice, their predominant passion, their faults and excellences, the influence they exerted in society, whether political, civil, or religious. To ascertain whether you have profited by this kind of reading or not, see if you can discourse on these subjects to advantage. If you have no associate with whom you can interchange thoughts, be your own prompter, converse with yourself, ask questions, and answer them, raise and obviate objections and difficulties, until the subject is familiarized to your mind. But if possible have a companion or two of like mind with yourself, and do not let an opportunity slip of eliciting something useful from him ; propose your doubts, ask your questions ; but never wilfully take up the wrong side of a question with a view to defend it.

5. In the study of books on divinity or philosophy, critically examine the sentiments of your author, and if he be considered a standard writer, treasure up—and this you

will do to the best advantage by making a synopsis in writing of his leading sentiments—in your memory and understanding, the doctrines advanced, so that you can refer to them, as occasion may require, with facility. But never undertake to advance a sentiment you do not thoroughly understand.

6. To insure success, “restrain,” as Monsieur Saurin has expressed it, “your avidity of knowing.” That kind of knowledge which is most lasting and beneficial, is obtained by slow degrees, as the fruit of a laborious and painful research. Many persons, viewing the difficulties of attaining a competent knowledge of the various subjects presented to their consideration, give up the pursuit in despair, and neglect the whole.

To prevent this evil, be not over anxious to accomplish the end of your labour, as though it must be done at once or not at all. By a patient perseverance, mastering first one thing, and then another, you will overcome every impediment, and arrive at a knowledge of every truth necessary for you to know. And that your mind may never

be idle, or triflingly employed, always have one principal subject in hand, to which you may recur, and on which you may profitably exercise your powers, when not otherwise employed in the specific and appropriate duties of your station. This will prevent that sort of mental vacuity, which engenders a restlessness of spirit, and which originates either from want of application to subjects that are profitable, or from perpetually poring either over our own, or the weaknesses and miseries of others.

7. In the mean time endeavour to ascertain the *practical* use of all you may wish to learn, that you may, as circumstances shall require, know how to apply your knowledge to useful and practical purposes. This, indeed, is the grand end to be had in view, in all our literary, as well as religious and moral pursuits. To be a mere recluse, is to be almost useless in the world. And that sort of knowledge which brings on a sluggishness of soul, dampens our zeal, and makes us indifferent about the salvation of the souls of others, is equally as deleterious as that mental indolence which makes us

content with ignorance, and begets a petulant disposition towards all those whose excellence eclipses our own.

8. You will do well to remember that all sound wisdom cometh down from the "Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Beware, therefore, of contracting a disrelish for *His* word, which is a lamp to our feet; and much more of supposing yourself so wise and self-sufficient, as not to need daily prayer to God. If you should, while professedly in the pursuit of *wisdom*, become so *foolish* as to think yourself so "rich and increased in goods," as not to feel your continual dependance on God, and therefore to break off communion with Him, you would be an infinite loser for all your labour. Often to lift up the heart in a short ejaculation to God for help, for wisdom to understand, for grace to sanctify, and for spiritual aid in our pursuits, even in the midst of our daily occupations, will be a lasting, as well as a consoling benefit to our own souls. This, together with our stated hours for prayer, will be a means of keeping up a

constant communion with God, and a never-failing spring of action to our souls, which, otherwise, may languish and die.

For more particular directions on this subject, *Watts on the Improvement of the Mind*, is recommended. But, for particular directions as a Methodist preacher, in relation to the minutia of many parts of your conduct, read *Dr. Adam Clarke's Letter to a Junior Preacher*. Though you may find some things in it, on account of their being adapted only to the state of society in Great Britain, hardly practicable in this country, there is so much judicious counsel, that every Methodist preacher ought to possess and read it. A man's usefulness in the pulpit depends more on the manner in which he conducts himself in private, and in social circles, even in matters of seemingly small importance, than we at first are apt to imagine. And the saying of St. Paul should be our constant motto, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient."

LETTER XV.

Concluding Observations.

TAKING for granted that you are complying, as far as your circumstances will admit, with the advice with which we commenced, namely, writing upon some theme every day, I will take the liberty, by way of conclusion, to suggest a few things, which may assist you in the farther prosecution of your studies. In the first place, then, do not depend too much upon books. Collect, indeed, all the information you can from books and from conversation with the wise and good; but after all, you must digest for yourself; you must let the sentiments of others undergo a thorough refinement in your own mind, by examining for yourself the reason of them, their truth and propriety, their fitness and adaptation to present times and circumstances; that you may bring from your *own* "treasury things new and old." You must be an original thinker. When you sit down to consider a subject, think for

yourself, arrange for yourself, clothe your ideas in your own language, and bring every thing warm from the heart. In the midst of your researches, lift up your soul to God for light, for love, for spiritual help ; and then throw yourself into the arms of your heavenly Father, and plunge into the centre of your subject, fearless of consequences ; and He whose servant you are, will bring you safe through, provided TRUTH be the object of your pursuit.

It was observed that you must not depend too much upon books. There is, however, one book, always open to your inspection, and which, therefore, you must constantly read : it is the book of experience : whatever passes here, you must observe, and carefully note. Mark passing events,—notice particular providences as they regard yourself—the Church—the world—and individual persons,—make them lessons of daily instruction, and subjects of prayer and thanksgiving.

Acquaint yourself thoroughly with the human heart. History, and especially Scripture history, will unfold it to your view.

In your studies be methodical. And as we are most familiar with ourselves, begin with *YOURSELF*. Take your pen, and endeavour to portray yourself—trace your origin—your end—separate, as far as you can, your soul from your body—consider them apart—combine them—contemplate your complex character—analyze your corporeal and intellectual natures—your physical and moral powers—consider your natural, moral, and relative condition—your social and individual capacity—your present duties and future prospects—connect the present and future world together—let your thoughts stretch themselves far “beyond the bounds of time and space”—and recollect that *that* is to be your future residence—that your business in this world is to fit yourself, and persuade others to fit themselves, for that eternal state. Oh ! what a theme opens ! What a world is *this* ! But how much more mysterious and incomprehensible *that* which is to come ! For your own improvement pursue each of the above heads until it is exhausted ; but never attempt to exhaust a subject in your public administration. Con-

concentrate your thoughts, and let the collected beams of truth light on the particular subject you would elucidate—otherwise, instead of edifying an audience, you will exhaust their patience, and defeat the object of your ministry—if you tire yourself you will fatigue your hearers, and both yourself and they will be dissatisfied with your performance. Having studied yourself, ascend,

Secondly, **TO HIM WHO MADE YOU.** Contemplate His perfections—meditate on the absolute independency of His existence—His Eternity—Power—Wisdom—Justice—Goodness—Holiness—Truth—Faithfulness—Longsuffering ;—Mark the administration of His government, and the dispensations of His providence—Make each of the attributes of His ineffable character, a *Theme*, or a separate subject of meditation—follow it in all its bearings—then concentrate them—fall down before this bright assemblage of infinite perfections—humbly adore Him in whom they inhere, while you confess your own ignorance, and entire dependance on Him for all things.

Next, take into consideration **REDEMP-**

TION—the benevolence of its character—the comprehensiveness of its provisions—its suitableness to the character of God and condition of man—its suitableness to man as a sinful being.—This will open to your soul a view of the tremendous scenes of Calvary—lead you to trace the life and death of Christ—to estimate the value of His atoning blood—and to meditate on His exquisite sufferings—His resurrection—ascension—the evidences of it on the day of Pentecost.—Here the dispensation of the SPIRIT will open to your view—you will understand the GLORY which was to follow the sufferings of Christ. From hence you will descend again to man, and be led to notice the operation of the Spirit upon his heart—working conviction—repentance—Faith in Christ—Justification—Sanctification—Inward and outward obedience to the law—obligation of the ordinances—Death—Resurrection—Judgment—Immortality.—What a field for the display of all your mental energies ! Do not attempt to leap over it at once ; but take a solemn walk from length to breadth, and carefully examine every tree, every flower,

every fountain, and every rivulet. In other words, do not mingle up in one sermon, every head of doctrine ; but make each point a separate discourse, especially where you are called to minister to the same congregation for a length of time. This method will greatly enlarge your mind, and force you to amplify your subjects, and to enter at large into a proof and illustration of them.

In all your studies, and especially in all your public administrations, you will mingle reflections upon the social and relative duties of life, as being the surest evidence of a work of grace upon the heart. A work of grace upon the ' heart ! Well understand this subject. You must learn it from *experience*. You cannot learn it from merely mental application. If you are, indeed, a true minister of the sanctuary, you are no stranger to this work of grace ; this inward smart of repentance, this joy in the Holy Ghost, this wrestling and struggling against temptation, this holy violence in taking the kingdom of God. Whatever literary accomplishments you may possess, they will not supersede the necessity, nor must they take

the place, of this gracious work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart. When you have learned this from *experience*, you will know how to sympathize with the distressed, to “rejoice with those who do rejoice, and to weep with those that weep.”

Before we conclude our observations, already protracted much beyond our original intention, permit us to recal your attention to the primary object which was suggested at the commencement, namely, *To save yourself and those who hear you.* To effect this great object, the plan of redemption and salvation must not only be clearly explained, but it must be enforced upon the conscience, as a subject which must be tested by every man’s experience, and exemplified in practical life. And this was the *last qualification of a minister of Christ, mentioned at the commencement of these Letters.* To do this effectually, we must bring into requisition all our powers, and all the aid we can obtain. But after all our efforts, we do well to recollect that this is far beyond human ability to accomplish. *God alone can give the increase. Not by might nor by power,*

but by my Spirit, saith the Lord. And we have no reason to believe that God will accompany any man's administrations, with the increased energies of His Spirit, unless that man *live in the Spirit*, unless he walk, *not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.* He who lives *by faith in the Son of God*, devoting himself entirely to His service, praying in the Spirit, and being otherwise called and qualified of God to be His minister, may expect the accompaniment of God's blessing, and may reasonably hope for success in his holy calling.

It is when the sacred truths of God's word are sealed upon the conscience by the Holy Ghost, that they exert an experimental and practical influence upon the heart and life. We may, indeed, so far as our perceptions of divine truth are orthodox, *talk* well upon religious subjects *without an experience* of these things; but our talk will be only as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. It is when the heart swells with love and gratitude to God, that we are drawn forth in tender sympathy and compassion to the souls of men. This, while it

gives courage to persevere in our work, inspires the tongue with arguments to persuade men to be reconciled to God.

As this is the ultimate end of all our labour, so every study should be made to contribute to its attainment. When souls need our personal attendance, or the Church calls for active service ; if the sick call for our counsel and prayers, the penitent sinner for instruction ; then retirement and study, however agreeable and otherwise necessary, are to be sacrificed, and the wisdom and the knowledge we may have obtained must be exemplified in practice. To make private studies an excuse for neglecting these claims upon our active attention, is to confess an entire ignorance, after all our studies, of the main end of our calling, and our determination to defeat the great purposes of the Christian ministry. What are the purposes of the Christian ministry ? Are they merely to occupy the mind with speculative truths ? Alas ! This were but a meagre object ! Did the Lord Jesus Christ descend from heaven—did he preach, suffer, die—merely for the purpose of instructing mankind in some ab-

stract truths ? No ! he came to rescue man from the thralldom of sin—to restore him to the image of God, by reforming his heart, and by rectifying his conduct. And if this was the end of the *Author* of the ministry, surely it ought to be the object of its *members*—if the *Master* proposed this as the grand object of *His* mission into our world, it ought certainly to be the object of all *His servants*.

This being the fact, the whole weight of our ministry should be brought to bear upon this point, as the main end for which it was instituted. Indeed this is the most difficult part of our work. To induce people to attend on our ministry,—to enlighten their understandings with the leading truths of divine revelation, or to bring them under the profession of Christianity, is easy in comparison to persuading them to renounce their sins, to reform their lives, to surrender their hearts to God, and to *live soberly and righteously in this present world*. This effect produced presents one of the most infallible tests of the orthodoxy of our ministry. *By their fruits ye shall know them*. And this maxim

applies to the truth of the doctrines delivered, as well as to the sincerity of the profession which is made : both are to be tested by their practical tendency. Knowledge, eloquence, talents, zeal, are all lost unless they be productive of reformation in the hearts and lives of sinners. We do not say that such a result must be universal. This is not to be expected, when even our Lord himself could do no mighty works among a certain people because of the hardness of their hearts. What we contend for is, that those who profess to believe our doctrine, and to be profited by our ministry, must furnish evidence of the sincerity of their faith, and the reality of their profit, by the righteousness of their lives ; and that therefore this must be the prevailing object of all our studies, all our labours, our preaching and exhortation. This object accomplished, we can say to them, “Ye are our epistle” (of recommendation) “written in our hearts, known and read of all men ; forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God,

not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart."

Finally,—“The king’s business requires haste.” What you are to do must be done quickly. Whatever opposition you may meet with, *persevere* ; whatever discouragements, *still persevere* ; urge your way ; make every thing bend to the main object of your mission ; you are a man of one work—of one employment ; you have no time to throw away ; you cannot afford time for trifling visits, for vain talk, for idle recreation ; the Judge standeth at the door ; His reward is with Him ; and He saith, *Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season ?*

[The following Letter was written in answer to a request from a young preacher, who asked the author's advice in regard to some points relating to his duty as a public teacher ; but though designed for him in particular, it was thought it might be useful to others in a similar situation ; and therefore was published in the Magazine ; and for the same reason it is now added to the foregoing Letters.]

LETTER TO A JUNIOR PREACHER.

MY DEAR BROTHER,—You have been pleased to ask my advice. So many things have been written, and so much to the purpose too, on the subject of preaching, and the duties connected with the gospel ministry, that to add more seems almost needless. Besides other works to which you may have recourse for general information on these subjects, I refer you, as a Methodist Preacher, to the *Preacher's Manual*, a little book published at the Methodist Book Room, which contains Dr. A. CLARKE'S *Letter to a Preacher*, his *Clavis Biblica*, and Dr. COKE'S *Four Discourses on the Gospel Ministry*.

However, as I can hardly deny any thing to one whom I both love and respect, and

in whose welfare and usefulness I cannot but feel a deep and lively interest, I will suggest a few thoughts which may not be unimportant to one just entering upon his ministerial work. As you have already taken a very considerable range in the sciences, and have enriched your mind with a knowledge of some of the learned languages while at school, I need say nothing in reference to those subjects, only continue your studies with the same assiduity, having continually a higher end in view than when you knew not the Lord. The field of science, you know, is vastly amplified, and will admit of perpetual enlargement and profitable culture.

1. I advise you to be much in private prayer and meditation. In order to this, avoid all company except such as your duty as a Christian Minister calls you to mingle with. Only visit *as a Minister of Christ*; letting every inviter know that he must receive you in *that character*, or not at all. The *sick*, and the *poor*, you *must* visit, or offend Christ.

2. Keep your own secrets, and let others keep theirs. The observance of this rule

will save you much time, much trouble, and many heart burnings.

3. Rise early in the morning, not allowing the birds to be beforehand with you in praise to God.

4. Be always neat, not fine, in your clothing and person. A sloven disgraces the pulpit.

5. The moment you find any one to suspect your sincerity in conversation, stop talking.

6. Never ask the counsel of any man who envies you, or who entertains suspicions of the purity of your motives.

7. Never contradict a *low slander*. Let the slanderer have *all* the credit of his lying report.

8. When you find a person always contradicting you, resorting to dogmatisms instead of using arguments, leave him to himself. He acts not from judgment, but from a testy disposition, which Omnipotence alone can change.

9. When you find a person always finding fault, passing over a thousand excellencies with "frigid indifference," and seizing

upon an infirmity or an accidental blunder, with the avidity with which a vulture would seize his prey, let him pass with you only as a *wayfaring man*. Never make him a *companion*. These two last advices apply only to those who consider themselves your equals. When called to instruct the ignorant, to reclaim the vicious or the wandering, you must persevere, whatever insults you meet with, until hope gives up to despair.

10. I have often thought of a saying of COTTEN MATHER, *that when you are most sincere and zealous, you will meet with the greatest opposition*. Let not this discourage you. He that proclaims war against hell must expect hell's rage.

11. Let the ignorance of others instruct you to be ashamed of their defects; the wise to be emulous of their virtues; the haughty to be meek; the avaricious to be benevolent; the indolent to be diligent; the disdainful to be kind and affectionate to all; the testy and clownish to be patient and gentle. There is one enemy I would, above all, have you, if possible, keep at a distance. It is not the devil; he cannot hurt you unless you first hurt yourself. It is not your

own heart, though that is sufficiently deceitful of itself to destroy you ; and therefore you must pray mightily to God, to give you a constant victory over inordinate self-love. It is, then, a self-conceited, ignorant, dogmatical, overbearing, affected, envious, whining man, who would attempt to teach you, to dispute with you, or to inspire you with a contempt of self. If you will stand against such a fellow, and keep your temper without a blush, I'll pronounce you not a philosopher, nor an able minister, but what is incomparably better than either, a *Christian hero*, who has conquered self. But when you find such persons—and they are by no means scarce—if you cannot run from them, I advise you to put a bridle on your tongue ; and while they beat you over the head and eyes, suffer in silence ; only lift up your heart to God for both yourself and them.

12. In certain companies, you had better be taken for a fool than to have it suspected that you have the least confidence in your own judgment. Choose the former, therefore, in most cases when so circumstanced ; for if you must suffer from such

kind of beings, you may, by letting them *think* you a fool, save them from the sin of *wilfully* slandering you *as such*, because they are determined, right or wrong, that you shall never have the reputation of a wise man.

13. If it should so come to pass in the course of your ministry, in consequence of a faithful discharge of its duties, that you should rise to eminence and celebrity, wonder not if the venom of envy should be shot at you. Think of Saul and David, Herod and his son, and a thousand others that might be named ; and do not deceive yourself with the belief that all who bear the Christian name are freed from this diabolical passion. While you will sacrifice your judgment to the whims and fancies of those Sauls and Herods, court their favour when you ought to manifest a contempt at their contemptible dispositions ; while you offer up to them the incense of adulation at the expense of a good conscience, instead of asserting the just independence of a rational being ; and while you smile at their folly, and bow submission to their tyranny ; you may, as a matter of great condescension,

meet the returns of good looks and words. I know not what advice to give you under such circumstances, except of a general character, and that is, whatever it may cost you, maintain the dignity of a man of God, and secure to yourself the reputation of an *honest* man in the estimation of those who know you, even though you should draw down on your head the thunder of all such haughty contemners of those excellences to which they despair of attaining. But if you should be so unfortunate as to be selected as an object of their displeasure, console yourself with the reflection that every man must be taxed in proportion to his property ; and having cheerfully discharged this debt, let them know that you have a treasure remaining that cannot be touched by any human hands, even “ a conscience void of offence towards God and man.”

In regard to preaching, I have only to say,

1. Select the leading idea in your text, and make that the subject matter of your sermon, and not mingle up every doctrine of the gospel in each sermon.

2. Neither read nor memorize your ser-

mons. Study all you can, write all you can, pray and meditate all you can, and you will not be at a loss for language to express your thoughts extemporaneously. Thus furnished, after maturing your subject, trust to your *judgment*, and not to memory. If a man of God, he will always help you by his Spirit.

3. Take it for granted, that your hearers know something as well as yourself, and therefore do not fatigue them with long sermons, dwelling on points of little or no importance, which they have heard a thousand times. Compress your thoughts into as few words as possible, and stop when you have done. Long sermons do no good by their length.

4. "Don't court a grin when you should woo a soul." Gravity is as essential as sincerity, to effect the objects of a gospel ministry. Affectation being the companion of ignorance, renders the latter doubly disgusting. Diffidence may prevent you from saying all you know, but affectation will make what you do say appear as the offspring of both pride and ignorance.

5. Study to be *good*, and not to be *great*.

If you must be *great*, let it be the effect of *goodness*, and the unavoidable consequence of a conscientious discharge of all your duties.

6. Labour *for God*, and He will both help and reward you. You shall be fruitful in your own soul, and witness the beneficial results of your labours in others.

In respect to your general deportment,

1. Be serious and solemn. In your intercourse with families, do not entertain them with facetious anecdotes to excite laughter. "I have said of laughter it is mad." I have been tormented at being in company with some professed ministers, who, instead of inspiring respect for the character, by grave and religious conversation, have disgraced themselves by a perpetual round of trite and trifling remarks, perhaps even boasting of their dexterity in making a bargain, not knowing that these very exploits of which they boasted, evinced the disgusting frivolity of their minds. Never descend to this abominable trash.

2. Make the children of the families where you visit bless you, by kindly noticing

every one of them, giving a word of instruction suited to their age and capacities, not forgetting them in your prayers. Never unnecessarily censure a child. And remember that they *are children*, and therefore you do not expect the wisdom and propriety of age and experience in them.

3. Never reprove a parent in the presence of his child, a husband in presence of his wife, and *vice versa*, unless it be for some crime that is notorious and flagrant; and even then it should, if possible, be concealed from each other; at least *you* ought not to reveal it to them.

4. Eat such things as are set before you, not affecting a delicacy of appetite, as though you belonged to another race of beings. You may recommend, both by precept and example, cleanliness; but do not needlessly put any one to pain.

5. Be kind and affable to all; respectful to the aged, and to all in office, whether civil, military, or ecclesiastical; condescending to inferiors, instructing the ignorant, communicative with the well informed, bearing with the foibles of youth, and commise-

rating to those in servitude. *He that is greatest must be servant of all.*

6. Avoid that most fruitless and unprofitable of all ministerial traffic, foolish chit chat.

7. You hint about marriage. You will doubtless marry. If you think it most for the glory of God—and few ever thought otherwise—fix on a suitable person, and have done with it. Do not pay your addresses to half a dozen or more at once. Never thus trifle with their affections and your own. Piety, good sense, and industry in a wife, are essential to conjugal happiness. When married, let not your wife govern either yourself or the church. God has made you the head; and if you are not qualified for the station, it is her misfortune, and therefore she must submit to it with patience.

8. You wish to do all the good you can. Call to your aid, therefore, every auxiliary in your power. Circulate good books. Our plan of printing and circulating religious books, is admirably calculated to aid the minister in his work. Let it be known that

you do not do this on account of the profits of sale. A just suspicion of this motive will destroy your dignity and usefulness. But if you do it from the same motive with which you preach the gospel, namely, to save souls, you will benefit both yourself and those to whom you sell them. Do not, therefore, affect the merchant, nor suffer yourself to be a pack horse for every mercenary man, who merely wishes to make you a bridge over which he may walk to the land of opulence. Take the Magazine, and read the Missionary Intelligence to the congregation, and then recommend it to them ; and make yourself acquainted with the contents of our books, that you may recommend them from a knowledge of their merits ; and thus teach them the necessity and utility of a continual acquisition of Christian knowledge. This is so far from being incompatible with your character as a minister of Christ, that I cannot see how you can discharge your duty in striving to do all the good you can, by neglecting this work.

CONTENTS.

	Page
PREFACE	3
LETTER I.	
Some General Remarks on the Importance and Utility of Study, for a successful Discharge of Ministerial Duty.....	9
LETTER II.	
The Method by which a Minister is enabled to ex- plain the Holy Scriptures.....	15
LETTER III.	
The Studies requisite to enable one to defend the Holy Scriptures.....	19
LETTER IV.	
Chronology, Prophecy, and Miracles.....	31
LETTER V.	
Geography.....	43
LETTER VI.	
Internal Testimony.....	52
LETTER VII.	
Biography	66
LETTER VIII.	
Philosophy—Natural and Moral.....	78
LETTER IX.	
Rhetoric, or Pulpit Oratory.....	90

CONTENTS.

Page

LETTER X.

Poetry 101

LETTER XI.

Use of Studying the Languages..... 118

LETTER XII.

Verbal Criticism 140

LETTER XIII.

The Church—its government—doctrines—duties
and powers of the Ministry—rights of its mem-
bers—its ordinances, &c..... 154

LETTER XIV.

Some General Remarks in regard to the manner
in which Books should be consulted 167

LETTER XV.

Concluding Observations..... 175

Letter to a Junior Preacher..... 187





MAR 8 1907

138
4020

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 022 171 217 1